

LIVING IN FEAR: THE EXPERIENCES OF PARENTS OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS  
IN "COLOURED" CAPE FLATS TOWNSHIPS 1985-1988.  
A SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

The present is a social-psychological study which describes and analyses the experiences of parents of political activists in "coloured" Cape Flats townships against the background of the socio-political upheaval in South Africa during the 1985/86 rebellion and thereafter. An ethnographic research method was used due to its suitability in terms of accessing the phenomena under study, and due to the theoretical problems associated with the use of traditional social psychological models in the South African context; it was argued that it is necessary to articulate the micro- and macro levels of social phenomena at the point of their intersection to do social psychology in an oppressive context. Outlines of the 1985/86 rebellion, which emphasized the role of youth and students, and of the methods of operation of the South African Police, from a historical perspective, were given as a backdrop against which the analyses of the empirical data were presented. The concrete experiences of the parents with respect to various forms of political repression were described and situated as specific stressors in their everyday lives; police presence, visits and searches of their homes, having a child 'on the run', detention without trial of their children, and the prevalent fear of being informed upon. While the particularly stressful aspects of these experiences were highlighted, they were moreover found to have had significant consequences in terms of contributing to the development of the parents' politicization and engagement in the political activities of their own children. These experiences were furthermore found to have precipitated the parents' own gradual involvement in support- and other activities offered by progressive organizations, which reinforced the development of an outlook of resistance towards the state. Although the security forces' engineering of a climate of fear in the townships was portrayed as initially being a pervasive aspect of daily life and a powerful deterrent to parental involvement, it later, on the basis of commonality of experiences of victimization and persecution, forged communality of spirit and unity in resistance. The parents' experiences were first and foremost found to be characterized by fundamental emotional intra-personal conflict, and the need for further research of the psychological sequelae of political repression and persecution was stressed. The thesis was concluded by a comparison of some central findings with related international as well as local research.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ANC    | African National Congress                            |
| APD    | African Peoples' Organization                        |
| AZAPO  | Azanian Peoples' Organization                        |
| BOSS   | Bureau for State Security                            |
| CAYCO  | Cape Youth Congress                                  |
| CBD    | Central Business District                            |
| COSAS  | Congress of South African Students                   |
| DC     | Dependant's Conference                               |
| DTT    | Detention Treatment Team                             |
| ECC    | End Conscription Campaign                            |
| FAMP   | Frontier Armed and Mounted Police                    |
| FEDSAW | Federation of South African Women                    |
| JMC    | Joint Management Centre                              |
| OASSSA | Organization for Appropriate Social Services in S.A. |
| PAC    | Pan-Africanist Congress                              |
| PFP    | Progressive Federal Party                            |
| PTSA   | Parents-Teacher-Student Association                  |
| RMG    | Repression Monitoring Group                          |
| SACBC  | South African Catholic Bishops' Conference           |
| SADF   | South African Defence Force                          |
| SAIRR  | South African Institute of Race Relations            |
| SAP    | South African Police                                 |
| SATS   | South African Transport Services                     |
| SOE    | State of Emergency                                   |
| SRC    | Students' Representative Council                     |
| STF    | Special Task Force                                   |
| TRSC   | Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee                |
| UCT    | University of Cape Town                              |
| UDF    | United Democratic Front                              |
| UMAC   | Unrest Monitoring Action Committee (PFP)             |
| UWC    | University of the Western Cape                       |
| WECSAC | Western Cape Student Action Committee                |
| WPCC   | Western Province Council of Churches                 |
| ZARF   | Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Polisie                  |

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

This thesis represents the results of over two years of fieldwork, undertaken in an attempt to document individual responses to political repression within the context of the State of Emergency in South Africa. The entire study, with the exception of three months in early 1986, was conducted under a continuous State of Emergency, imposed on the 26th of October 1985 in the particular area of study. It is a social-psychological study, focused on parents of political activists resident in "coloured" townships in the Greater Cape Town area, and it has sought to describe and analyse the ways in which their lives have been affected by state repression directed at their children. It should already be apparent that it would be impossible to do so without making reference to the agents and methods of repression, the reasons for their existence, as well as the reasons for them being directed at these children; in short, the entire context of the growing resistance to apartheid and white-minority rule in South Africa. Thus, this will be the background against which the empirical data is examined.

The introduction which follows is meant to provide part of this background. It attempts to trace the development of the present crisis from events immediately preceding the introduction of a new constitution in 1984, and to show the growth of mass-based



resistance as it rallied around increasingly broader socio-political issues. As the focus narrows to the situation in the Western Cape, it is meant to illustrate the prominent role played by youth and students in the 1985/86 revolt, as well as to compare their conception and strategising of the revolt in relation to the previous uprisings in 1976 and 1980. Moreover, it also attempts to give an indication of what the day-to-day climate was like in the townships, to which most of the revolt was confined, and of the conditions facing the families of actively involved youth and students, thereby setting the scene for the specific descriptions of parents' experiences that will be given in later chapters.

### Background to the Revolt

The South African state is in a crisis (Hall 1986). In the last few years, growing resistance to apartheid has spilled over into violent opposition with which the state has had to deal, mainly through the use of force. Since the coming to power of the Botha-regime in 1978, the role of the security forces (the SADF and the SAP) in government tactics has become increasingly central, and simultaneously, a reform programme has been embarked on in order to appease apartheid critics. This two-pronged approach to maintaining white domination while at the same time attempting to bring the oppressed to an acceptable modern material standard is seen as

"part of an emerging pattern which is beginning to characterize the P.W. Botha administration; a pattern of military style leadership, with tighter and more direct state control in all spheres". (Hachten & Giffard 1984, p.13)

The original Verwoerdian blueprint of apartheid saw a grand plan of removing the bulk of blacks to 'independent' homelands or bantustans, of which they were to be both residents and citizens, while at the same time serving as a huge reservoir of migratory labour for white South African interests. In this way, it would have been possible to claim that apartheid no longer existed; South Africa would become a white nation, and blacks were now 'free' and 'independent' in their 'own' countries.

In the late 1970's and increasingly in the 1980's however, it has become necessary, because of the mounting internal as well as international pressure, to change the plan to one of limited co-option, couched in democratic-sounding terminology, which announced the government's intention of 'power-sharing' with Blacks. Following the report of the Rabie commission of inquiry into the parliamentary system, the new constitutional proposals comprising the tri-cameral parliament, and a National Statutory Council for blacks were presented. The widespread and deep dissatisfaction with the proposals, which did not "depart from the essential framework of white political control over the destiny of South Africa" (Haysom 1986a p.4), coupled with the current economic climate and actions by the international community led to the broad protests and opposition to apartheid that the country witnessed in 1985-87, the most concerted and militant hitherto seen in South Africa.

#### Intensification of Conflict and Protest, 1984

A number of authors have pinpointed the confluence of certain

economic and political factors as having resulted in the widespread protests in the townships in the Vaal triangle from September 1984, and as the immediate starting point of the nationwide rebellion which plunged the country into a State of Emergency which, except for three months in 1986, has lasted ever since (SAIRR 1985, Foster 1986, Hall 1986, Haysom 1986a, Kruss 1987a, 1987b, Bundy 1987, Dawes & De Villiers 1987). Increases in rents and service charges in these townships resulted in protest meetings and rallies organized by a host of extra-parliamentary political organizations such as the UDF, AZAPO, COSAS, and FEDSAW, and in work and school stayaways which showed a 60% response by workers and nearly 100% response by students (SAIRR 1986). Met by total refusals from the authorities to reconsider the increases, the rebellion spread gradually to townships on the Reef and the East Rand, partly fuelled by the "characteristically repressive state response" (Hall 1986 p.2).

The escalation of protest was also partly due to the successes of the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee (TRSC), a broad alliance of popular organizations which coordinated the protest actions and included student, worker, and political organizations. It formulated a set of general political and educational demands, reflecting the participation of students and workers in the struggle: the withdrawal of troops from the townships, the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, the scrapping of increases in rents, bus fares and service charges, the release of political prisoners and the reinstatement of dismissed workers.

Throughout 1984, protests and unrest were mainly confined to the Transvaal, while the Cape witnessed a concerted campaign against the tri-cameral parliament which included the "million signatures campaign", and boycotts of the tri-cameral elections.

In early 1985, the rebellion extended to the Port Elizabeth - Witenhage areas, with mass stayaways both by students and workers, and consumer boycotts. In the Eastern Cape, where there appears to have been a long-established tradition of especially heavy-handed police methods and action, harsher and more explicit instructions, and heavier arms were issued to police units on township patrols than in other parts of the country (Haysom 1986b). This was a factor in the resultant shootings at Langa on the 21 of March, the anniversary of the Sharpville shootings in 1960, which further exacerbated the unrest situation and sparked nationwide outrage and protest. In the following three months, violence and rebellion continued to escalate in the Eastern Cape and in the Transvaal with violent confrontations in the townships, more than 114 000 pupils in 130 schools boycotting classes, and the continuing resignation of community councillors as a result of pressure from township residents (Hall 1986). On June 16, the 9th anniversary of Soweto 1976, bomb blasts rocked Durban and Port Elizabeth, and many violent confrontations took place between protesters and police in Natal and the Transvaal.

"Characteristically, the state response was to suppress resistance while denying that the situation was critical". (Hall 1986 p.11)

To this effect, the Minister of Law and Order declared in Cape

Town at the end of April that there was "no general unrest in South Africa" (Hall 1986 p.11). However, this could no longer be denied when the government declared a State of Emergency on the 21 of July.

#### Unrest in the Western Cape

Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula was largely unaffected by the wide scale rebellion in the first six months of 1985, with the exception of vehement protests against the Langa shootings in March. Hall writes that June 16 was quiet in the the Cape, with minimal police presence in the townships (Hall 1986 p. 12).

In the second half of the year, however, the Western Cape was transformed. The spark which ignited the keg appears to have been the events subsequent to the murder of 4 UDF-affiliated community leaders in Craddock early in July, amid claims that they had been assassinated by right-wing agents, "perhaps associated with the police" (Hall 1986 p.12). Boycotts broke out in African and "coloured" schools, and in the days immediately preceding the funeral of the Craddock 4 on July 20, memorial services, which were also attended by large crowds of high school pupils and university students, were forcibly broken up by police and further fuelled the militant response by Cape Town students. On the day following the funeral, the State of Emergency was declared, which added more cause for protest.

Students immediately took a leading role in protests in Cape Town, with both universities and 29 secondary schools launching into boycotts of classes. Western Cape Student Action Committee

(WECSAC), a large guiding body, was formed to coordinate action, and formulated a set of demands which centered on the rescindment of the State of Emergency, the withdrawal of troops from the townships, the right to SRC's in the schools, and the reinstatement of a transferred teacher. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of WECSAC, it appeared that local school and student bodies were often ahead of their directives and actions:

"It is difficult to tell whether the student leadership was lagging behind the impetus of its constituency, or whether WECSAC's attempts to suspend the boycott were a tactical device to recall the pupils to the schools - the only location where effective organization could take place. But responses by the security forces, as well as events elsewhere in the country, certainly provided impetus for militancy....Within this environment, political organizations found ready support in calls for mass protest in the wider community as opposition to the State of Emergency and the South African state in general was voiced from platforms at a number of well attended meetings." (Hall 1986 p. 13)

In August, Dr. Allan Boesak announced plans for a huge march to Pollsmoor prison to demand the release of Nelson Mandela at the end of the month. The march was to demonstrate the "extent of mass rejection of the South African state apparatus" (Hall 1986 p. 14), and the heavy-handed clampdown and show of force which the police used to prevent it from taking place served as the ignitor of the following 2 months of intensive civil unrest in the greater Cape Town area:

"..the effect of this repression was electric in the townships comprising greater Cape Town." (Hall 1986 p. 14)

Hall writes that literally "thousands" took to the streets and were involved in clashes with security forces resulting in 28

deaths and 150 seriously injured in the following 48 hours. The banning of the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) on the 28 of August further intensified the violent protests, particularly on the part of the students, and on the 6th of September 464 schools and colleges in the Western Cape were closed. Burning barricades in township streets, stonings, petrol bombings, and daily clashes with security forces continued in an ever increasing spiral of violence until the end of October, during which time it became evident that "resistance was being taken up by a far wider constituency than previously" (Hall 1986 p. 16), with mass funerals and rallies taking place all over the Cape Peninsula, and adults and parents being mobilized on an unprecedented scale.

The sudden, wide-scale mobilization prompted the formation of a host of new organizations and support structures, joining a growing voice of calls and demands for an end to the State of Emergency, troops out of the townships, the right of SRC's and PTSA's to meet, and the removal of police and security guards from schools. By the 25th of October, a security police spokesman estimated that at least 60 people had died since the end of August, R 2.76 million damage to property had been inflicted, and that there had been more than 2000 incidents of violent confrontation. On the following day, the State of Emergency was extended to 8 magisterial districts in the Western Cape (Hall 1986 p. 16).

The imposition of the State of Emergency in the Western Cape signalled a new approach on the part of the state. It appears to

have immediately preceded the beginning of the end of the year exams in "coloured" schools (Department of Education and Culture, DEC), and the way in which they were dealt with indicated the government's determination in dealing with the crisis. It acted very decisively. During the initial stage of the 1985/86 rebellion in the Western Cape, the strategy of the police could be said to have been one of 'dousing fires' in that they were merely able to respond to incidents and combat violence and rebellion on the scene.

With the extension of the State of Emergency to the Western Cape, and subsequent police action, however, the state reasserted its authority. It operationalized a strategy which indicated that it was more intent on actively and systematically deterring political resistance through the use of repression. On the 25th of October, the night before the declaration of the State of Emergency, police swooped on political and student leaders, detaining 69, and the Emergency regulations imposed stringent restrictions on 100 political organizations, restricted students to classrooms, or their homes after school, and prohibited all activities not part of the school curriculum. The subsequent harsher methods used by the police were also foreshadowed by the restrictions imposed on the media, prohibiting the 'recording of any riot situation'. Coupled with intensive presence in township areas and large scale security operations, these measures contributed to the state beginning to acquire a measure of control over the situation:

"Although stonethrowing and petrol bomb attacks



continued on a daily basis, the overall volume of this form of resistance does seem to have declined, probably as a result of the severe restraints on movements and association in the townships, and the ever-present threat of arrest. Instead protest and resistance began to take more specific forms as action was channeled by government regulations". (Hall 1986 p. 22)

For the residents of the townships and the students, these forms were mainly centered around the passive resistance that could be engaged in at home and in the schools. The students refused to write end-of-year examinations, as the year had been severely disrupted by boycotts, while parents and residents showed their support for students and detainees, and continued protest against the state, through candlelight vigils in their communities. Both of these forms of resistance were, however, forcibly brought to a halt by police.

At the end of 1985, the violent climate escalated as the Western Cape saw an increase in armed insurgency. The police suddenly found themselves being targets as sporadic gunfire attacks began, and hand grenade attacks on police stations and private dwellings of policemen and perceived collaborators took place with increasing frequency. At the same time, the growing support for the ANC became evident, as huge banners and ANC flags were openly and defiantly displayed at large unrest-related funerals and ANC slogans were heard. The police responded with increased presence in the townships, sending convoys of armed personnel carriers on show-of-force tours through several communities, and with intensive search operations where entire townships were sealed off, and house-to-house searches performed, often with allegations of abusive and brutal treatment in their wake. At the

same time, both the police and the army embarked on campaigns to improve their image in the eyes of township residents.

During 1986, continued militancy was evident in the Western Cape. The sustained protest in education during the first half of the year was matched by an increasing militancy amongst workers, with the launch of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), a UDF affiliate, in March, and a strong response to the May 1 work stayaway. Additionally, early 1986 suggested that the support for the ANC and armed insurgency had widened and was continuing to accelerate. The State of Emergency was lifted on the 7 of March but unrest continued to escalate and the death toll continued to rise. During the first six months of 1986, the daily death toll was nearly double that of 1985: 4.4 compared to 2.4 (RMG 7/87) Four days before the tenth anniversary of the Soweto 1976 revolt, the second State of Emergency was declared.

Realizing that 1985 was not simply an outbreak of student violence and rebellion, the government found it necessary to embark on another plan in 1986. Now the overall state strategy was "aimed at crushing popular organizations, particularly the emergent street committees and civic structures" (Kruss 1987a p. 3). To this effect, the Emergency regulations imposed restrictions on 119 organizations, effectively preventing them from meeting or publishing statements in any form. Simultaneously, the powers of arrest, detention, and search of the police were extended, granting them indemnity from prosecution, while at the same time the press were prohibited

from reporting or commenting on any actions of the security forces. In addition, the regulations contained a definition of 'subversive statements' which "entailed a virtual press blackout" (Kruss 1987a p. 3).

1986 saw a "dramatic increase in security force action in the black townships of Cape Town" (Kruss 1987a p.3), during which the police were relying on forceful and abusive methods to serve as an intimidating deterrent to further involvement in political protest and action. The police also made unprecedented use of detention without trial in order both to hamper the functioning of political organizations and to deter further involvement. The Detainees Parents Support Committee (DPSC) and the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) have estimated that more than 13,000 people were detained during 1986; there was an increase in State of Emergency detentions of over 600% and Internal Security Act detentions of 472% compared to 1985 (RMG 11/1987), and these affected mainly political and student organizations, unions, clergy, journalists, and community workers.

#### Dynamics of Youth and Student Involvement 1976-1980-1985

The student revolt in Soweto in 1976 was sparked by a specific educational issue: Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in their schools. It was thus not a general political protest in the way the revolt was conceived, but more of a spontaneous rallying around a specific issue which subsequently grew into a wider rebellion against the system of Bantu education and the white racist minority ruling South Africa. The action taken by the students appeared often random, and the brutal responses by the

police to protest marches and rallies inspired a more militant stance and more violent action. Later, a set of general educational demands were formulated which condemned the system of Bantu education (or 'gutter education'). In their approach, the students were strongly inspired by Black Consciousness thought, taking a very militant, non-collaborationist stance. According to Bundy, they could be seen as

"a self-aware age group (which) sought generational unity, distanced themselves from their parents, and spoke for: "we, the youth of South Africa"." (Bundy 1987 p. 310)

Thus, the fundamental approach of the students was one of militant independence and self-sufficiency, in that they did not feel that they needed their parents in order to carry out their objectives, although later in the revolt, the necessity for linking forces with the workers and the political movement in general gradually emerged.

The 1980 schools' boycotts in the Western Cape were initially a response to poor conditions (structurally, hygienically, and educationally) in African, "coloured", and Indian schools, which through solidarity actions by many other (mainly secondary) schools swelled into a massive nationwide boycott, touching more than 140 000 pupils at its height (Molteno 1987). While the quality as well as the level of commitment amongst the leadership was seen as more uneven than in 1976, it appears to have been more explicit from the start of the boycotts, as opposed to the 1976 revolt, that education was merely one facet of the liberation struggle (Molteno 1987). The students saw themselves

as centrally involved in the struggle for freedom in South Africa, though fighting this battle mainly in the arena of their education.

The inferiority of the system of Bantu education was now clearly seen, and the basis for the rejection of the educational system was the absence of equality with white education, which should have existed. As it stood, the educational system for Blacks was seen as an integral part of fitting into the plan of "grand apartheid" and separate development. Thus, pamphlets issued during the boycott contained analyses of Bantu education as merely "preparing us for the labour market" (Molteno 1987 p. 171). There was therefore now not only an understanding of the South African state as one of racist domination and oppression, but also as one of capitalist exploitation. The boycott thus signified the refusal of the students to avail themselves of "inferior education", "the source of supply for a cheap labour system", and the refusal to become "cogs in the capitalist machine" (Molteno 1987 p. 173). The appearance of some sort of marxist analysis of the school and work situation in relation to the South African social structures therefore signified a growing sophistication on the part of the students, who were no longer merely blindly rebelling, but had more of a long term goal in mind.

At the same time, the necessity to work hand in hand with workers and parents had become a priority, because only through fundamental change of the structure of society could blacks be

liberated. Two pamphlets issued during this time stated:

"It is now necessary to link up the struggle in the school with the general struggle in the community and of the workers against oppression and exploitation."

"Students, as part of the educational programme, must go into the community. Parents must be informed and enlightened." (Quoted in Molteno 1987 p. 175)

Here were thus the germs of the broader conception of the educational struggle that came to be incorporated into the Youth Movements which sprung up in many communities and townships in the Western Cape in the years following the 1980 schools' boycott (see page 20).

The slogan adopted during the boycott, "Education for Liberation" gave evidence, furthermore, that the students were not merely protesting against the quality of their facilities and their instruction; they would not be satisfied by mere face-lifts or cosmetic improvements. Their goal was clearly spelled out: an end to apartheid, and a social order based on discrimination and exploitation. The educational system had to be completely reformed to stimulate and prepare students for a new type of society: a "democratic, free and united Azania" (Molteno 1987 p. 171).

As we have seen, the large scale 1985/86 revolt in the Western Cape was largely led by students and youth. Protest meetings and class boycotts began at the universities and training colleges, University of Western Cape, University of Cape Town and Hewat Training College, and then spread to Senior Secondary schools, particularly in the "coloured" areas on the Cape Flats:

Manenberg, Bonteheuwel, Elsies River, Hanover Park, Mitchell's Plain, Heideveld, Athlone, Grassy Park, etc. The slogan that was adopted by the students in 1985, "Liberation before Education" indicated a clear shift of awareness in comparison with earlier rebellions; patience and understanding with the government and its racial and educational policies had waned, in fact, run out. The students had arrived at a position where they were no longer interested in 'reforms', which also signified their distrust of the state's reform programme in general, and these proposals were now rejected. The students wanted a new order before they would avail themselves of whatever education there was to be offered; the level of militancy displayed during 1985/86 showed their determination to achieve this.

The level of militancy of the 1985/86 rebellion was clearly evidenced by the extent of violent action engaged in by the students: "uncontrolled rioting" (Hall 1986 p.14), barricade building and burning, petrol bombing, stone throwing and arson were the main violent acts perpetrated. This kind of violent action, though on the whole following the main theoretical guidelines of the broad liberation movement, was often uncoordinated and local. Smaller, community-based groupings were often engaging in protest and violence without the broader consent of coordinating bodies, though this was also in part dependent on the nature of police repression which made communication and liason with other communities difficult. From these localized acts of resistance, and the heavy-handed retaliation by the security forces, emerged the wider community

response that signified mass-based resistance.

"On numerous occasions, actions by small groups of activists swelled into community response after violent security force response, leading again to further repression and the escalation of resistance". (Hall 1986 p. 3)

Another facet of the youth involvement of 1985/86 was the emerging recognition of the need for, and active pursuit of, strong links with the progressive movement as a whole. This was one of the main lessons from the previous uprisings, but it was not properly consolidated due to the temporary and wave-like nature of student movements (Bundy 1987). In 1985, this was one of the issues which was taken up and incorporated in the early stages of the rebellion. With an unprecedented number of youth getting involved on a school level, the formation of numerous student/youth organizations which subsequently affiliated to political organizations effectively sealed this union of students and workers. The existence of the UDF as an umbrella organizations with an articulated political agenda to which emerging organizations could affiliate would account for many of the advances made on this front since 1985.

In contrast to earlier student rebellions in the Western Cape, however, the 1985/86 rebellion saw an unprecedented number of young schoolchildren, 14-16 years old, becoming involved in militant protest activities, whereas previously mainly standard 9 and 10 pupils (17-18 years old) had been involved. As Bundy (1987) has observed, growing support for the ANC and the armed struggle was evident during late 1985 in the Western Cape, and this was particularly so amongst this young generation of



actively involved pupils. An informant, who became involved during the 1980 schools' boycotts and has remained active since, said in mid-1986:

"Its totally different now. You see all these young kids who are supportive of the ANC now. When I was in matric, even I didn't know what the Freedom Charter was. It was only in my first year of university that I got to learn about it. But now, these 14-15 year old students, everybody knows about it." [1:1]

Bundy (1987) has observed that the revolt of 1985/86 was almost a euphoric militant movement, certain of victory and the imminent exhaustion of the state's resources, which he termed 'immediatism' (p. 322). This was decidedly the mood of the localized youth/student groups, who eagerly and excitedly "took action"[1:2] against objects and people perceived as belonging to or working for the state. The attitude was one of open war against "the enemy"[1:3], a term that became common usage amongst these activists, particularly those in the 'new' generation of youth in their mid-teens who, for the first time, became involved in political resistance during the 1985/86 rebellion.

It was mainly these youth/student groups who were responsible for upstaging the coordinated plans of umbrella organizations such as WECSAC and CAYCO. Senior activists were dismayed with their "lack of discipline"[1:4], and their ignorance of the broader theoretical guidelines of the liberation struggle. During 1986, however, the violent state response made the 'immediatists' themselves realize that 'the struggle' would be a long, hard battle which, in order to succeed, would require more than the type of action they had engaged in:

"..simply in terms of courage, ingenuity and commitment, a great deal was demanded. Youth activists faced not mere discomforts or reprovals, but the retributive violence of the state." (Bundy 1987 p. 329)

Thus, the task of the senior activists to bring the 'immediatists' into line with the broader student/youth movement was facilitated by the stepping up of state repression. For the youth themselves, a personal experience of repression underlined that they had underestimated the level of commitment required to be a political activist and to fulfill the objectives of the liberation struggle.

"For me, having been detained has definitely made my commitment to the struggle much deeper. Yes, I was involved in the struggle before that, but I didn't see it so seriously, and my commitment wasn't...I didn't think about it. It was more an exciting thing for me; I was on the run, going to meetings, organizing, distributing pamphlets, always together with my comrades. It was like a very exciting time for me. But while I was detained, I had time to think and that experience has made my commitment much deeper." [1:5]

#### Formation of Youth Organizations in the Western Cape.

Although Soweto 1976 sent violent repercussions through some of the "coloured" townships on the Cape Flats (in Elsies River 34 died and 90 were injured during riots in June), it did not have the same political impact. There were virtually no community-based progressive organizations formed in the Western Cape after 1976 (Matiwana & Walters 1985). Towards the end of the decade, there was some movement, however, on a national level with the formation of AZAPO in 1978 and COSAS in 1979 (Hall 1986 p.6), and a rising level of organization amongst trade unions. Then, with strikes, consumer and schools' boycotts in 1980 and 1981, this

process was dramatically accelerated, and now organizations began springing up all over the Western Cape. In the Greater Cape Town area, 85 voluntary associations were formed between 1980 and 1984 which were "selfconsciously democratic" in their constitution, and displayed a "shift towards the need for theoretical understanding rather than blind activism" (Matiwana & Walters 1985 p. 52).

After the 1980 schools' boycott, the youths in the Western Cape began to organize. In various "coloured" townships on the Cape Flats, Youth Movements sprang up which, although not affiliated to each other, had similar orientations and goals (Westcott 1988). According to an informant, they were mainly concerned with the "social upliftment" of the youth in the area, and aspired to raising their "socio-political awareness"[1:6]. They rallied around issues of amenities for the youth in these areas, like libraries, sports facilities, entertainment venues, and used recreation (hiking, sports, etc.) and socializing (teaparties, discos, discussions) as methods of operation. At this time, there were many different theoretical leanings present within these organizations; charterists, Black Consciousness adherents, ultra-leftists. In the early 1980's many of the Youth Movement leaders from various areas were studying together at the University of Western Cape, and their discussions led to the gradual crystallization of common aims and objectives which eventually led to the formation of a regional structure, the Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO), in 1983. 27 youth organizations representing 29 communities were founding members (Matiwana and Walters 1985),

and a charterist perspective prevailed in this formation as CAYCO affiliated to the UDF in 1984.

### The Theoretical Position on Parents

The 1976 uprisings were to a large extent inspired by Black Consciousness thought. The youth were militant and saw themselves as 'going it alone'. Additionally, the concern was a specific issue, Bantu Education, which they felt concerned the youth only. It was therefore not necessary to involve the parents, and it appears that even though, during the revolt, the leadership saw the benefit and necessity of linking forces with the workers and the progressive movement in general, the parents were never conceptualized as belonging to the workers. Nevertheless, the consolidation of advances made after the revolt saw the formulation of a broader theoretical understanding which also included the parents (Kane-Berman 1978).

In 1980, there was a strong response by parents, who were often supportive of their children, though for many, the education issue was the one most important not to "bugger around with"[1:7]. Here, we saw more of an initial awareness of the need to include the parents in the struggle, but the situation was contradictory, as many activists saw their own parents as those who most wanted to discourage their involvement. At the end of the boycott, however, a theoretical perspective had been consolidated whereby the necessity of linking forces with the worker movement was seen, and the parents were now perceived as one and the same as the workers. In addition, the parents were seen as the 'backbone' in the capitalist South African society,

providing the cheap labour which the state needed to perpetuate the system of domination and exploitation; it was therefore becoming a priority to mobilize the parents into the progressive movement (Molteno 1987).

By 1985, a strong theoretical perspective on the struggle for a new political system had been developed by CAYCO, to which much of the leadership of the rebellion prescribed. In its position, the issue of the mobilization of the parents had achieved such importance as to be part of its five specified aims (Bundy 1987), and it was now the task of the youth to individually effect this through strengthening the relationship with their parents, and educating them regarding their struggle. During the rebellion, however, strong localized, independent action often went ahead of coordinated theoretical leadership. Amongst the new generation of militant, 'immediatist' youth, in their mid-teens, the prevailing tendency was to reject the parents as reactionary. In addition, the generation gap was initially seen as a major problem as the unprecedented militancy and radicalism of the youth prevented any compromise. The mobilization of the parents as an aim of the students and youth was therefore, for a time, left behind by the new generation of 1985/86 activists.

### The Present Study

By way of this introduction, we have sought to illustrate a number of important aspects of the 1985/86 rebellion. Firstly, that this period in modern South African history has been the most concerted and militant expression of opposition to apartheid

and the state hitherto seen in this country. Secondly, that the youth and students played a central role in bringing about this expression, to the extent that they became the main targets of the state's repressive violence. Thirdly, that the youth and the students had developed a coherent theoretical conceptualization of their role in the liberation struggle, advancing the position and understanding developed in the previous uprisings, 1976 and 1980, prioritizing both the strengthening of relationships with the parents, and their mobilization into this struggle. Finally, that a new generation of militant township youth, which assumed leadership roles at least during the early stages of the 1985/86 rebellion, did not subscribe to the theoretical position on parents established by CAYCO, thereby setting back its programme of attempting to include the parents.

In this thesis, we aim to develop an argument which flows out of these points: that parents of these political activists have been subjected to a whole host of stressful and frightening situations due to state repression directed at their children; that the different approaches adopted by the two distinct 'generations' of activists led to different effects in the parent-child relationships; that through their experiences, the parents came to be transformed with respect to their political consciousness, as well as their outlook on the South African political situation in general; and that the nature of state repression was one of the central catalysts in bringing about this transformation of parents of political activists in "coloured" Cape Flats townships, thereby calling the long-term effectiveness of the state's

repressive strategy into question.

"Many participants in the street battles with police and army that came to characterize 1985 had not previously been politically active...and...far from restoring 'normality', actions by security forces have widened the basis of resistance, suggesting that the facility for community organization may have been increased for the future...as was the case in 1976 and 1980, containment and repression of opposition by the state accelerated mass support for protest and resistance." (Hall 1986 p.3)

The present study has sought to understand, from a social-psychological perspective, how this process took place. It has sought to document the kinds of experiences, as well as transformations as a result thereof, which transpired among parents of political activists during the time of the 1985/86 rebellion and in its aftermath: for the saga didn't end there. For the youth and students, and their parents as well, 'the struggle continues' as many are still very much in the midst of the repercussions of the events of 1985/86 through protracted court cases, or serving sentences for public violence, arson, or other politically related offences. For others, the events remain very much fresh in the memory for a long time to come as family members may have been injured, maimed or killed in the uprisings, or may have been forced to go underground or into exile. In fact, it was only the beginning as parents and adults have themselves become increasingly involved and committed to the ideas which the youth fought for: an end to racial discrimination and oppression in South Africa, and equality for all in a democratic, non-racial society.

In Chapter 2, the method and the aims of this thesis will be more

thoroughly elaborated, as well as the background and motivations out of which it arose. Chapter 3 will briefly examine historical and contemporary policing methods and strategies in apartheid society, and situate them as specific stressors within the context of political repression. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 seek to descriptively illustrate the parents' experiences with respect to the every-day stressors in their communities in a state of civil unrest and repression, as well as to trace the process whereby, and the extent to which, their political attitudes and outlook have become transformed. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a summing up of the findings of this section, a brief comparison of some important similarities with local as well as international research on effects of political repression and civil unrest, and gives suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

This is a social-psychological study. As such, it is concerned with the lived meanings of a group of people in a particular situation; in this case the experiences of parents of political activists in "coloured" Cape Flats townships against the background of political repression during a State of Emergency in South Africa. Concretely, the study therefore aims at enquiring into the experience of being a parent of a political activist in an environment of direct and naked repression, and inhabiting areas which are virtually under siege by security forces using violence as an instrument of social control; in what ways has it affected him/her psychologically? But while this gives us firm guidelines as to our direction, we are still faced with the problem of how to proceed; according to what theoretical framework are we to conduct our investigation?

#### The Question of Theory

If we look towards the theory of social psychology to guide us in this endeavour, we immediately run into difficulties. For the past three decades or more, there has been an ongoing battle for theoretical dominance between positivists and interactionists within the discipline itself. With the decline in popularity of survey and hypothesis-testing research methods in the 1950's and 60's came an increased emphasis on openness in approach which encouraged the use of qualitative methods, setting the stage for this intra-disciplinary rivalry. The internal battle between

these two main camps centered on, among other issues, the role of the researcher in the research situation and the question of value-free or objective research, as well as whether the means of data collection should be quantitative or qualitative. Another main issue, closely related to the research issue, concerned the status of social psychology as a science. This debate appears to have occupied both parties to such an extent as to exclude any self-critical examination of the discipline as largely serving the white-collar, capitalist military and industrial machinery (Sampson 1983, Wexler 1983).

"With the establishment of corporate liberal capitalist social forms in the United States, social psychology became more routinized, delimited and directly utilized as a technical force of military and industrial production". (Wexler 1983 p. 14)

Increasingly, Wexler (1983) argues, both of these modes of thought have become so constructed, and further adapted to serving the military-industrial complex, that they have become insulated against any self-awareness of this manner of functioning. To this effect, Wexler asserts that "theoretical construction in social psychology functions to occlude the social....and produces social ignorance" (Wexler 1983 p. 17). The nature of the mode of inquiry of social psychology has functioned to obscure the relationship between everyday individual life and collective social organization by attempting to convince us of the natural and universal nature of phenomena that are in fact socially, culturally, and historically specific. Thus, social psychology has become a scientific discipline serving ruling class interests, ahistorical, apolitical, asocial, and by virtue

thereof in fact subverting its own scientificity.

With this discussion firmly in mind, we must consider the context of conducting social psychological research in South Africa, which not only is an oppressive situation, but also one in which white capitalist interests employ science in the service of further entrenching white minority rule and the continued subjugation and exploitation of a Black majority. South Africa is the only country in the world with racially based discrimination enshrined in its constitution, and the reform programme which has been embarked on in recent years has not been designed to fundamentally change this state of affairs. Further, we may take it as established (WHO 1977, Duckitt 1983, Turton 1987) that current socio-political conditions in South Africa do have negative psychological effects, and are basically detrimental to human development.

In embarking on a social psychological research project, then, one is confronted with a certain choice: 1) Whether to use a traditional social psychological model and thereby assist in perpetuating the status quo, or whether to attempt to use a more critical model which aspires to expose it; and 2) on a professional level, can one claim to be a psychologist with a conscience if one knowingly helps to perpetuate a system which, as has been established, is the source of detrimental psychological effects? If we are still having trouble making a decision at this point, we might consult Wexler for help, who claims that the most recent role which mainstream social psychology has come to play has been that of

"the rationalization and justification, by the imprimatur of institutional sciences, of popular methods of containment. Among the ideological methods of denying social contradictions, one of the most important is the construction of everyday methods to avoid facing what people believe they cannot change." (1983 p.14)

We should take this statement to be highly appropriate to South Africa. Social psychological principles have here increasingly been employed in the service of the state in the area of social control and state security. In this country, this has taken several different forms: Firstly, and most obviously, psychological theories of intergroup relations and group behaviour have been used to justify and legitimate racial segregation and the policy of 'separate development' (Posel 1984); secondly, theories of crowd behaviour have been used as a basis for the riot control methods employed by the security forces (Romer-Heitman 1985, Toups 1985); thirdly, scientific evidence has provided a foundation for practices of intimidation, information extraction, and terror during incarceration (Amnesty International 1986, Foster 1987); and finally, the entire rhetoric employed by the state, both in terms of style and content has sought to reinforce the status quo as well as to invalidate and 'disprove' alternative assessments (Boonzaier & Sharp 1988). The recent National Party "This is the reality..." advertising campaign is but one example. Partly through the use of these principles, the apartheid regime has been able to control and maintain the oppressed as oppressed. Wexler spells out how this is accomplished:

"The divide and conquer method of cultural hegemony

proceeds by posing dichotomies which both drop out the central content as well as interconnections of aspects of the social". (1983 p. 18)

Thus, Wexler says, through practices which flow out of scientific endeavours and which function to obscure the methods of ideological practice, set justifications and legitimizations are given for the system, based on false dichotomies and contextually abstracted information, which dictate particular perceptions of reality and thereby prevent, indeed prohibit, individual interpretations of the situation which may expose this mode of functioning. Even the scientific community itself appears to be under the spell of state directions: Dawes (1986) has commented on the total reliance of South African psychology departments on American and European mainstream models of thought and practice which are in fact inappropriate to the particular local conditions which apply in South Africa, and have only served to perpetuate the status quo further.

Scheepers (1988), as if echoing this, draws attention to the fact that psychological research in South Africa has shown a general avoidance of socio-political issues. Moreover, she levels criticism of those studies which have addressed South African socio-political issues for not being sufficiently critical in their approach to and treatment of them. In essence, she reproaches them for failing to

"explicate the way in which historically specific exploitative, dehumanizing, and repressive socio-economic and political relations penetrate an individual's psychic structure". (1988 p.4)

A social psychology which seeks to achieve relevance in the South

African context needs to take full account of the social and its permeation of the personal. We must attempt to discard non-relevant psychological models which are inappropriate to the context in question, and which only function to contribute to the continued subjugation and oppression of the majority of the population (Dawes 1986, Foster 1986). It is necessary, therefore, to take a theoretical stand which avoids falling into this trap.

We have thus come to answers to the issues which confronted us above. The pursuit of social psychological research in an oppressive context must attempt to break up the discourse of the oppressor, critically examine it in a broader light, and expose its points of application and its mode of functioning. The question of which theoretical framework to employ in a social psychological study in South Africa rests upon considerations of this kind.

Wexler advocates a critical social psychology which not only addresses relevant socio-political issues, but which also strives to heal the individual-society dichotomy which has characterized modern social psychology. He maintains that

"The aim of a critical social psychology, beyond critique, beyond substantive theory, is the articulation of concrete everyday experience in a way which recovers the suppressed social." (1983 p. 141)

What both Wexler and Scheepers appear to be saying, then, is that the main task of social psychology, particularly in the South African context, is to reconstruct the relationship between the social context and the individual, whereby both are co-

constituted. In this way social psychology can reveal, rather than conceal, the organization of collective social life, and truly become, in the words of Wexler, "a social psychology of the undoing of domination" (1983 p. 167). Thus, while this overview of some of the theoretical complexities in embarking on a social psychological research project in a South African context has not provided us with a theoretical framework from which to operate, it has at least given us a starting point and some important guidelines as to how to proceed: the focus on everyday experience, the double concern of the personal and the social, and the practice of a critical social psychology which attempts to break the patterns of mainstream theory and practice.

The present study is an attempt to understand how peculiar South African practices and conditions have become manifest in individual thought and action, and to situate them, analytically, in the context of the present-day socio-political climate. It is an attempt to elucidate specific ways in which apartheid society affects people in a direct sense; in this case, how parents of those involved in the youth-based extra-parliamentary political opposition have been affected by state repression during a state of unrest.

One of the main criteria whereby both social psychology and sociology become scientific is the utilization of an appropriate method of inquiry to the subject under study (Silverman 1985). Considering that I was interested in describing specific social processes over time, the unfolding of social relationships, the attitudes to the on-going socio-political turmoil and change, and

how these fed back into the community, a qualitative approach based on participant observation and in-depth respondent and informant interviews seemed the most appropriate. I would thereby also be, in terms of Wexler's requirements, in an ideal position to describe "concrete everyday experience" as a way to explicate the full relationship between the social and the personal.

The qualitative approach of ethnography has several advantages in the present context. Firstly, in an area of research which has hardly begun to be explored, the detailed description of specific contemporary social processes must be considered advantageous. Second, through description, we are able to show how meanings arise in the context of behaviour, and thereby come to an everyday understanding of the situated character of interaction. Thirdly, through observation, we are not bound by pre-judgements or hypotheses regarding the nature of the phenomena under study, and are therefore open to events and conditions we encounter in the field. Fourthly, by gathering data in naturally-occurring situations, we are learning everyday conceptions of reality which we may interpret through the examination of broader historical events and processes.

In addition, this study has sought to document basic and concrete ways in which individuals have experienced the impact of political repression on themselves and their families. Particularly in the South African context, this may be considered an advantage due to the lack of previous research in this country. This is so not only because of a high level of violence



and civil unrest, which may make the fieldwork hazardous, but also because

"Against a background of official discouragement and resentment or suspicion on the part of a large section of the community, formal field work of the type usually undertaken by anthropologists and sociologists is unusually difficult". (Whisson 1971 p. 46)

The research method was chosen primarily out of consideration to its suitability in accessing the particular phenomena in question, however. I was further reassured in this opinion by a highly experienced researcher of the psychological sequelae of violence who said "You need to live there as an anthropologist in order to tap just how the violence affects daily life" (McWhirter 1987). While it is not possible to do so in contemporary South Africa, where residential segregation on racial grounds prevents this, McWhirter's statement underlines the importance of using ethnographic methods in a study of this kind.

The basic model which guides sociological and social psychological ethnography, including the present study, is the interactionist approach, which is concerned with the creation and change of symbolic orders via the medium of social interaction. The process of conducting research is conceived as a subject-to-subject transaction, in contrast to a positivistic model, which sees it in terms of an object-to-object relationship. The research process itself is therefore a symbolic order on its own, based on the interactions of the researcher in the field. The method as an instrument of research can therefore never be neutral; since it itself defines how the topic is symbolically constituted in the particular research project at hand, it is

simultaneously part and parcel of the process of interactions effecting the transformation of the symbolic order. Thus, the researcher is constantly engaged in the evolution of the symbolic transformation at the same time as attempting to document it.

The interactionist approach has been the basic theoretical foundation on which this project rests, but there have also been a number of other important theoretical guidelines apart from those associated with the critical perspective already mentioned above; we have relied on certain principles of ethnomethodology in the practical carrying out of the day-to-day data collection, as well as in the analysis of the data.

1) A focus on actor's justifications for new beliefs: In ethnomethodology, one of the principal concerns has to do with the way in which actors in the setting under study create and maintain social order. In the present context, we have documented parents' psychological journey from being politically naive and disinterested to being aware and firmly in favour of social and political change; in this, we have sought to pay special attention to the factors and influences in bringing about and sustaining the parents' firm stand against the state, since this is a new perspective which is under considerable social pressure, and which requires courage and determination on the part of the parents to sustain.

"The ethnomethodological ethnographer starts from the question of how the participants in some event find its character and sustain it, or fail to, as a joint activity". (Dingwall 1981 p. 134)

2) Closely related to this point is the next, which concerns the description of 'stocks of knowledge'. Ethnomethodology is firmly rooted in an analytic posture oriented to the mundane or everyday, based on Schutz's (1964) idea of the 'natural attitude'. By paying close attention to the very basic nature of mundane activities and events, we obtain a view of how the actors' internal reality is constructed in terms of common sense understandings of the environment, and thereby of how they make use of tacit knowledge in going about daily as well as less frequently occurring business.

3) Finally, another related point: Although, as we shall see below, the original focus of the study was changed, remnants of a phenomenological attitude have nevertheless been present throughout the study. This is relevant in terms of our basic approach to data, in that we have interrogated experiences of specific situations phenomenologically for their structure and function in the context of their occurrence. This is consonant with our basic approach of concern with psychological meanings of the experiences of the parents, for, after all, it is a study in social psychology.

### The Research Process

This study was conceived during the latter half of 1985 and arose out of a desire to study the effects of repression in the townships on the everyday lives of their residents, both from a psychological and social perspective; i.e. how has it affected people's daily routines, their psychological well-being, family relationships, people's responses to violence and stressful

situations, their attitudes to the state and its reasons for repression, and how has it changed patterns of socialization and daily activities of those affected? Given the socio-political conditions in South Africa, and my own situation as a newcomer in the country, to pursue this desire presented several problems, which will be dealt with below.

My first priority was to quickly introduce myself to the issues and events relevant to the current political situation. In September 1985, I joined an organization which specialized in relief work for those affected by state policies and repression, as well as monitoring political repression generally, and worked in its office as a volunteer for almost eighteen months. For the rest, I relied on daily and weekly newspapers, the South African Library as well as various newfound friends for background and supplementary information regarding the revolt, which was in full progress. During this time, I contemplated various strategies for attacking my research topic.

One of the prominent news features of 1985 was the stream of allegations of individuals assaulted, injured or killed in police action or during arrests and detentions. This prompted me to attempt to approach the topic from the point of view of a study in victimology, but with one important difference; as I had been trained in phenomenological research, I proposed to use these kinds of methods in my study. Victimology, moreover, has come under recent criticism for being reliant on positivistic methods, being overly concerned with statistical prediction-type

studies, and not paying attention to the subjective experience of victims themselves which, apart from excluding important data from the findings, also limited understanding of victimology itself (Wertz 1985). Therefore, the project was conceived as a study in victimology, loosely based on the study carried out by Fischer and Wertz (1979), but being complemented by actual fieldwork in a township where I would seek to obtain an everyday understanding of people's experience. This was seen as an important part in that without it, it would be rather difficult to contextualize the results from the interviews with the victims themselves and the research would therefore be running the risk of not being relevant to the particular social context as it prevailed at the time. To this end, a number of assault victims were accessed, who were victimized in a situation of unrest but were not, according to own testimony, involved in the unrest, and I began spending time with contacts in several townships in order to choose one in which to work.

After proceeding with this focus for a number of months, I began having difficulties finding assault victims. It was now early 1986, and for many of them, the immediacy of the assault had faded and they were therefore now remembering things as if they were in the distant past. Moreover, it was difficult to simply find them; the criteria for inclusion in the study were rather stringent, and it seemed as if only a handful of people of whom my contacts knew met these criteria.

The Fieldwork: At the same time, however, I had been spending time in a particular township, and through contact persons I had been able to meet a number of people in the community, mainly parents, who themselves, or whose son and daughters had been detained, assaulted, forced to go on the run, or harrassed by the police. I was getting to know people in the area, and beginning to orient myself in the township. Thinking that the problem with finding assault victims would sort itself out, I forged ahead. I began to compile a number of preliminary interviews, and documented my daily visits to the area, the people I met, the conversations I had with them and the general observations I made. Just before the declaration of the 1986 State of Emergency on the 12th of June, however, I was told by my contacts to stay away from the area because police repression was getting more intensive and heavy-handed, and by my presence, I attracted unnecessary attention to people and their homes which might entail a search of the house or detention of a member of the family. Thus, for several months, I was unable to carry out any work, and this time served as a period of refocusing and consolidation of the data I had gathered.

In October 1986, I could again resume my work. The intensity of the repression had abated sufficiently for me to be able to do so. Additionally, I had been introduced to several people who were politically active in progressive organizations in the area, and who were prepared to work with me, at a time when those with whom I had previously been working still felt it was risky. Nevertheless, I continued to have contact with, and later resumed

a working relationship with my initial contacts. I now worked with a different emphasis, however, because the consolidation period had yielded some important preliminary hypotheses:

- i) Adults not necessarily involved in unrest had been (severely) affected and personally disturbed by police actions in the area.
- ii) This had in the great majority of cases happened because of their childrens' involvement in "the struggle".
- iii) Because of the way in which they had been affected, these adults had come to take a firm stand against the government.

Thus, I now began to focus the study on parents of political activists, and adopted an operational definition of a number of youths in the area as "political activists" because they considered themselves to be "involved in the struggle", not necessarily because they were office holders in political organizations or even belonged to any such organization. Yet they participated in politically related events and referred to themselves as "comrades". Their parents became the subjects in the study, but I also wanted to look at conditions and daily occurrences in the township as a framework for understanding their experiences. Furthermore, I sought to understand the youth movement and the culture of the "comrades" in the area as a necessary backdrop to how the situation had developed. And finally, to use an analysis of the dynamics of the revolt in general, as well as resultant security force actions as the final framework in which to situate the parents' experience. Thus

evolved the present ethnographic study.

The data was collected by means of participant observation and direct, semi-structured interviews with parents, informants, and activists over a period of 22 months, from October 1986 to August 1988. Daily visits were recorded in the form of fieldnotes. All data collection took place on location, including the interviews, and spanned all days of the week, including weekends and public holidays.

The point of study was a large, working-class, "coloured" township on the Cape Flats, with a population exceeding 50 000 (1985 Census figures). The intention of choosing a township in which to work after initial reconnaissance in several townships was abandoned because of time and access constraints; it was simply unfeasible to do so. Instead, although some reconnaissance had taken place in several other communities, when access to the township in question was granted, and it fulfilled several preliminary criteria for the study, I proceeded with the fieldwork.

I had set four criteria for the selection of the community in which to conduct the fieldwork, taking into account my own particular circumstances. These were:

a) Access: Since I was unfamiliar with the conditions and the culture in the townships, and additionally being white, I considered it essential to gain access to the point of study through gatekeepers which would be able to help me acclimatize to these conditions. Furthermore, I wanted to operate with consent



in the area, rather than attempt working undercover, which would have been doomed to failure.

b) Potential for a wide working area within the township: This point is related to the issue of access. Simply, I wanted to be able to access as wide a range of individuals within the township as possible, being aware that polarization due to the political events at the time was extreme. I therefore did not want to be seen to be too closely associated with explicit political structures in the area. As I began to be more integrated in the area, however, and the direction of my research necessitated interviewing individuals active in political organizations in the area, it was unavoidable for me not to be seen as having a certain relationship to these structures.

c) Bi-lingualism: By this I simply mean that a large portion of the community should be able to communicate with me in English due to my difficulty communicating in Afrikaans.

d) Occurrence of a significant degree of unrest and repression in the area: Without the presence of these kinds of processes in the area, this study would not have materialized. However, most of the working class, township-type "coloured" communities on the Cape Flats were experiencing these phenomena to a 'significant' degree, with incidents of stoning- and/or petrol bomb attacks, burning barricades, protest marches, etc., occurring virtually daily; I therefore had a number of potential townships to choose from. It was rather the fact that I was granted access to the particular area in question which determined the choice of the

point of study.

The Interviewees: The parents consisted mainly of mothers, as several were single-parent families and as the bulk of the fieldwork was carried out during weekdays. They were housewives, or workers in industry or service, middle-aged or approaching late adulthood, and at a point in life when the provision for their children had high priority. In most cases, they had not been educated beyond standard 8, and had lived in the area more than 10 years. The majority of parents were Christian, but many were Muslim and one Rastafarian. Some were very religiously inclined, while others, particularly since the family's coming into contact with the national democratic struggle, only observed major religious occasions.

The interviewees were accessed through informants, parents with whom I was familiar or had already interviewed, or through activists whom I knew through the fieldwork. Formal interviews were arranged and conducted, in most cases two with each parent, in addition to informal visits to their homes, conversations, and encounters with the parents in various settings in the area during the course of the study. Some parents were initially referred to me by informants or other parents as having been "affected" through repression directed at their involved children, but other parents were accessed from knowing that their children considered themselves to be "involved in the struggle", regardless of whether or not they were members of any extra-parliamentary political organization.

The Interviews: A total of 38 formal interviews with 24 parents were conducted. By 'formal' I simply mean that on these occasions I had a formal appointment with the parents to meet them (usually in their own homes) and conduct an interview. Since the participants expressed reluctance to be tape recorded, they were all recorded by hand. In the interests of both the protection of the identities of the interviewees, and maintaining the level of trust which I was building in the community, the issue of the tape recording was not pursued further. Throughout the interviews, which were all conducted in English and of a duration of between 35 and 110 minutes, I attempted to record the interviewees' statements in note form, which directly afterwards were rewritten into full-length transcripts. While this method unfortunately allowed for a certain amount of spill, the parts that were captured were as close as possible to verbatim.

On many other occasions, I paid informal visits to parents' homes, during which we would chat about current events in the area or in the region, their own personal experiences and feelings. On these occasions, however, I made no claims to being the exclusive focus of their time; instead, I adapted to their routines and commitments, and stayed if time and activities allowed. Most certainly part of the process of data collection, these informal visits were however conceived as part of the day-to-day fieldwork in the area, and was recorded as fieldnotes, not interviews.

The initial interviews were completely open-ended. Typically, I

would begin with a question such as "Could you tell me what it is like being a parent in (area) at this time?" This was often enough to spark a flood of stories and experiences of being a parent of a political activist subjected to harsh and ruthless police repression and persecution. My own participation was thereafter limited to requests for clarification or extrapolation on points of detail of those stories and experiences.

From these initial interviews, a picture of the parents' day-to-day experiences began to emerge. They centred primarily on various kinds of confrontations with the police, from which I developed a number of significant themes, largely those into which chapter 4 has been divided. I sought to have the interviewees address each theme, i.e. "What was it like for you when your son/daughter was 'on the run'/in detention?", giving the interviews a certain structure although less open questions were still not posed. The intensified focus in these areas yielded a number of subthemes; out of these developed the various perceived stressful aspects.

Much later, after speaking to parents on an intimate level over a period of over a year, an understanding of their gradual political awakening and involvement emerged, and this became a later focus in the study.

#### Constraints on Researcher/Problems in the Field

Apart from the first few months of exploratory fieldwork, between March and June 1986, the entire study was carried out under a continuous State of Emergency which presented several problems:

a) Limited access to point of study: Because the area was occasionally sealed off by security forces, with manned roadblocks at the entrance to the township and detailed searches of vehicles and passengers carried out, I was on those occasions prevented from access to the area.

b) Unrest/Repression: Although these were the conditions which in terms of the focus of the study were desirable, they also on occasion prevented me from carrying out fieldwork. If I was on the scene when violent protest action erupted or police action ensued, I attempted to observe and document the events, although with a concern for my own and others' safety. If I was indoors, however, when these kinds of events occurred somewhere in the vicinity, it was often impossible to thereafter move around the area without risking injury or interference from the security forces. On those occasions, I remained where I was until I was sure of being able to have safe passage out of the township.

#### Role of the Researcher

At the beginning of the study, I presented myself to contacts and initial interviewees as a student interested in finding out how the general level of unrest and violence in the area had affected people's lives. I thought this would be a non-threatening way of introducing myself and what I was intending to do. I soon found, however, that this presented problems in terms of my credibility, and especially how my sincerity was perceived. My informants made it clear to me that people were tired of academics coming with their instruments and interview schedules only to disappear and

never to be seen or heard from again as soon as they had been completed. They would be interested in participating if the research could be useful to them, however.

I made two changes in my approach: I introduced myself as a psychologist interested in studying the effects of violence in the area, and I became involved in a practical capacity in an on-going group in the area, meeting once per week or once per fortnight. These changes markedly helped my acceptability: I was seen as a professional with certain skills which could be useful, and I was seen as being directly involved in the community. In addition, I was also perceived as someone sympathetic to a progressive view of the South African situation, to which I believe the ease with which I moved around in the area, and my capacity to relate to the people, contributed. Thus, I was also seen as a potential advocate for grievances in the community which concerned my area of specialization.

#### Limitations of the Study

The following discussion will be divided into two parts. We will be dealing with methodological/theoretical limitations of the study separately from limitations arising out of the practical conditions which guided the day-to-day conduct of the research.

##### a) Theoretical/Methodological Limitations:

We will here mainly address criticisms of the interactionist perspective in ethnography, and how these may or may not have had negative consequences in terms of the study. There are four main areas of criticism:

i) a focus on the present may blind the researcher to important events which occurred in the past. This point of critique may certainly be valid, taking into account that I arrived in South Africa in 1985. However, it is noteworthy that I might very well have been resident in Cape Town for years, yet still have been oblivious to important events which transpired in "coloured" townships. This is one of the prominent features of apartheid society: division and separation on racial grounds.

I have, however, attempted to counter this criticism in some degree by relying on informant interviews for as detailed as possible a background picture of the community in general, as well as important socio-political events and developments in the area during the past twelve years, i.e. since about the time of the Soweto revolt in June 1976. Moreover, I have consulted sources which have documented events and opinions of "coloureds" in the same time period for consistencies (e.g. Molteno 1987, Fynnock 1980, 1982, Hitner and Jenkin 1976, Van der Ross 1979, Stone 1972, Small 1970, Whisson 1971, etc.), and my data and interpretation thereof has not been incompatible with these.

ii) Confidantes or informants in the setting may be entirely unrepresentative of less open participants. First of all, I consider this point of critique to be somewhat misdirected as it seems to emanate from a positivist point of view, which is certainly not grounds for criticism of ethnography. However, if we give credibility to it, this is something which is impossible to judge. In this situation, the difficulty of gaining access to

a "coloured" township, as well as to the individuals within it who had been affected by repression made it impossible to explore several different avenues. In addition, the polarization which existed in these communities made me understand that I must tread carefully. Therefore, once I had gained access, and the point of entry was consistent with the conditions I had set, I could only carry on working.

ii) The observer may change the situation just by his presence, and so a decision about what role to adopt will be fateful. This is certainly true, but it is also a problem which is unavoidable in ethnographic fieldwork. Simply, in making a decision to undertake an ethnographic study, we have gone beyond this potential problem in favour of the value of carrying out the project itself. All we can do is to try to anticipate what consequences the adoption of various roles will have, and after the study evaluate the consequences of the one chosen.

iv) The researcher may "go native". This criticism is mainly directed at long term studies where the researcher assumes the participant observer role to the full, including taking up residence in the field. In the present study, the risk of going native was minimal; field visits were normally of between 1 and 6 hours duration, after which I returned home to my Group Area. I therefore lived a, for me, 'normal' life, and the fieldvisits were merely spent as hours 'at work' during the course of a normal working day.



#### b) Practical Limitations.

The limitations of the study that can be associated with the practical and field conditions surrounding the study can be said to comprise the following points:

i) Throughout the thesis, we are discussing our findings in a way which suggests that we have sufficient grounds for taking them to be valid for parents of "coloured" political activists generally. This is not necessarily so. While of course the aim of ethnography is to generate "universal interactive propositions" (Silverman 1985 p. 102), it has been done intentionally for the specific reason of safeguarding the anonymity of the point of study. The research was carried out in one specific township, and should be read accordingly. It is safe to assume, however, that other townships have gone through a similar process of a gradual proliferation of the kinds of experiences we have described here.

ii) My lack of knowledge of Afrikaans was a definite shortcoming in the study, particularly since a special type of the language is spoken in the area of research, and similar areas. There were times when I could only grasp the context of what was being talked about, not any of the detailed content, which has limited my access to data. The data collected transpired almost exclusively in English.

This chapter had described how the present study came about, and how the research itself was carried out. It has also surveyed

some of the theoretical and methodological complexities confronting a social scientist in the South African context. We argued that it was necessary to situate the data within the entire framework of the growing resistance to apartheid and the increasingly violent state repression used to combat this resistance. In the following chapter, we will enter into an analysis of the methods of the South African Police, the workhorse of the state's repressive machinery.

## CHAPTER 3

### POLICING AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL SEQUELAE OF REPRESSION IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

#### Introduction

Both internationally and also to a large extent internally, the South African state is seen as a violent, coercive power. Since the mid-1970s, as we have seen, the government has placed increasing emphasis on the 'total strategy' in order to safeguard the maintenance of its rule and apartheid. To this end, the role of the security forces (the SAP and the SADF) has been strengthened tremendously. In the ten-year period 1972-1981, allocations in the national budget for their modernization and expansion increased by over 860% (SAIRR 1982 p.58). During the same period, in the face of growing internal resistance, international condemnation and sanctions, and the slowing down of the internal economy, the government saw it necessary to introduce a series of reforms to make the system more acceptable to both foreign and domestic critics. However, these reforms were never intended to bring about fundamental constitutional change, nor to introduce a democratic form of government in South Africa, but only to effect the continued oppression of the majority of the population in more subtle ways. In the words of the Minister of Defence, Magnus Malan:

"The time for a rethink of all our national resources is now...This 'rethink' definitely does not mean changes in the constitution or social system, but it aims at a reorientation of activities within the framework of the prevailing order. For whites, moderate blacks, and cooperative tribal leaders, the issue at stake is survival". (General Malan in interview 1977,

quoted in Pinnock 1982 p. 261)

Speaking at a time of reassessment after the 1976 Soweto riots, Malan indicated that recent events had inspired fear in the leadership, which necessitated a new, modern strategy. With the help of a co-option programme of the growing urban black middle-class and puppets in the 'homelands', the project of limited reform was embarked upon. However, the 1980 schools' boycott and subsequent nationwide unrest, as well as the proliferation of grassroots organizations in their aftermath, drove home the point that the reforms in themselves would not be feasible if not enacted by force:

"These reforms and concessions, however, were unable to solve the problem of growing urban unemployment nor, on their own, contain the intensifying resistance. So alongside the co-optive strategies was to go increased repression". (Pinnock 1982 p.264)

Thus, faced with increased resistance to unpopular reforms such as the tri-cameral parliament, and the plans for the National Statutory Council, the state found it necessary to use physical coercion for their implementation. Opposition, it seems, must be suppressed by force, not met with negotiation. For in South Africa, as Bundy (1987) has observed: "Coercion, not consensus, is the social cement of the state edifice" (p.329).

Those mainly subjected to this coercion have obviously been the Black majority. For forty years or more, the South African state has been operating under the principle of 'divide and rule' (Western 1981), having devised an intricate 'population groups' blueprint as a foundation and legitimization for its "separate development" policies, but in effect has used it to fragment and

weaken opposition, and to contain the majority of the population without basic human and social rights. With full control over the legislature, the white minority government saw no hindrance to enacting degrading and discriminatory practices into law, and then to use its control apparatus, the SAP, to enforce these "unpopular and unjust laws" (Opposition member R. Swart in Parliament Friday May 17 1982, Hansard col. 6304,5).

"For many people on the other side of the charge-office counter, therefore, the rule of law becomes indistinguishable from the rule of force, and justice no more than the right of the stronger". (Pinnock 1982 p. 294)

Thus, the creation of pass laws, separate amenities, immorality legislation, group areas, and numerous other discriminatory laws, and their strict and brutal enforcement, have not only created confusion and anger as regards the rule of law, nor social dissatisfaction and distress; they have indeed had more deep seated psychological and emotional sequelae on the part of those whom are being policed. The systematic deprivation of basic human rights practiced in South Africa has prompted the World Health Organization to write:

"In the context of the psychosocial stresses and deprivations which are inherent by design in today's South African society...literally millions of people in the republic of South Africa are being exposed to stresses undercutting at the roots of their experience of dignity, security and purpose in life". (WHO 1977 p. 5)

In other words, the continued, consistent, and often violent subjugation of and discrimination against a group of people will create stresses as their day to day existence becomes

characterized by hostility and unpredictability. In South Africa, this has been taking place purely on racial grounds, and so "the non-whites in South Africa are forced to exist in an anomalous stressful environment which adversely affects their socialization" (WHO 1977 p.6).

With the escalation of civil unrest in South Africa in recent years, this environment has worsened considerably. Not only has this meant a dramatic increase in endemic violence and hence the stress level of those involved in or living in the vicinity of the violence (Swartz et. al. 1986), but the policing methods themselves have contributed to a growing atmosphere of hostility and unpredictability for Blacks, as increasingly violent means have been used against them. On the one hand, numerous authors have commented on the nature and kind of security force action as to a large extent having engendered the violent climate (SACBC 1984, SA Outlook 1985, Foster 1986, Hall 1986, Haysom 1986b, Bishop 1987). On the other, security force actions have in numerous incidents clearly been intended not only to quell unrest or disperse crowds, but have been explicitly punitive in character, through the use of excessive force, so as to deter individuals from further involvement in protest activities, or political opposition at all. This prompted South African Outlook (1985) to ask:

"What is going on? Are the police out of control? indulging in what according to the affidavits and eye-witness accounts, is sadistic brutality in defence of their individual political beliefs? Why do the high-ranking police officers not restrain or control those individuals who wield the quirts? Or is it that these highest ranking officers allow it, in fact want it to happen?" (115:1372 p. 122)

These and countless other allegations of excessive use of force by the police have resulted in an outcry of protests and calls for investigations into police conduct. These have however been answered by the standard assurances from the police that the complaints should be reported to the nearest police station, after which they would be thoroughly investigated. Not only has this situation prevented many potential complainants from lodging complaints, as they have felt it preposterous to have those who have been implicated in the commission of a crime, the SAP, investigate it, but people have also reported being prevented from laying a charge at the police station, the extreme case being the granting of a court order restraining a police sergeant from preventing people from lodging complaints against the SAP (Weekly Mail 1/1986). Moreover, the SAP has demonstrated considerable tardiness and inefficiency in investigating the complaints laid:

"Investigation may be so slow as to be quite ineffective. For example, as far as we are aware, not one investigation of police action in recent months in the Cape Peninsula has been completed, despite many complaints laid." (SAIRR 1985b p. 3)

In addition, a local unrest monitoring group stopped taking affidavits from victims of police brutality because of the police charging the complainants with perjury if their subsequent court testimony deviated in any detail from the affidavit itself (UMAC, personal communication). These and other incidents have contributed to the overwhelming impression that the SAP are intent on using any methods they see fit to prevent popular organizations from gaining a wide membership and express

opposition to the government, in fact, to deter such affiliation and expression.

In effect, what we are saying is that the South African Police has been used to enforce fundamentally discriminatory and human-rights violating legislation, itself displaying a discriminatory attitude in the execution of its duties, and as a result negative psychological effects have been the lot of those against whom it has been directed. Moreover, in recent years, with the growth of mass resistance to apartheid and the state, the police have been perceived as using more repressive measures to enforce this legislation, and their focus has been more centered on those engaged in resistance in order to deter or eradicate such opposition. It is this development we will now attempt to trace.

#### History of the SAP: Serving White Interests

A host of authors have commented on the SAP's treatment of and attitude towards Blacks in the course of their duties (Van Onselen 1959, Sachs 1970, Stone 1972, Kane-Berman 1978, Du Preez 1979, SACBC 1984, Black Sash 1985, SAIRR 1985b, SA Outlook 1985, Crisis News 1985, 1986, Grassroots 1985, 1986, Hall 1986, Haysom 1983, 1986a, 1986b, Bishop 1987, Bundy 1987, Kruss 1987a, Scharf 1988, etc.). Originally, this seems certainly to have stemmed from the prejudiced opinions of inferiority held concerning the "Native". Van Onselen (1959) describes the establishment of one of the first police forces, The Frontier Armed and Mounted Police (FAMP) in 1855, which served the frontier and border districts in the Eastern Cape, and often on the northern borders of the



Cape province.

"The FAMP were constantly engaged in skirmishes with the native tribes and had very little opportunity of carrying out the purpose for which they had been established, the retrieving of stolen stock and other forms of police work." (p.20)

At the time, the policemen in this force were apparently more intent on controlling and fighting the native than doing policework, and the qualities which were highly valued were to be "an outstanding horseman, and a deadly shot with a gun" (p.20). Then, as now, the policeforce was considered "a military body, and the first line of defence in South Africa" (p. 159). The question is, from whom is it supposed to defend South Africans, and which South Africans? In other words, whose interests has the SAP served? In the course of this chapter, it will become clear that it has consistently worked towards protecting the white minority from the "swart gevaar". In recent years, the emphasis on internal security has increased, while the term 'the enemy', referring to those who are intent on transforming the South African power structure with a democratic aim in mind, whom the SAP is constantly and tirelessly pursuing, has become common usage (SAIRR 1985, Servamus 1/1986).

The Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek Polisie (ZARP) was established in 1881 as a result of the massive industrial expansion on the Rand, and with this, the police force was becoming more organized and sophisticated. Yet many

"joined the force with no other qualification than their birthright and the conviction that the policeman's duty in life was confined to pushing Africans off sidewalks". (Van Onselen 1959 p. 24)

This kind of discriminatory attitude was not confined to informal preconceptions of individual policemen. It prevailed in official policy. Blacks were uncivilized and should be kept outside white areas; if properly trained, they may be suitable for unskilled employment in these areas, but regulations were made stringent enough to prevent them from 'loitering' there. A declaration by the Native Affairs Commission in 1921 stated:

"It should be understood that the town is a European area in which there is no place for the redundant native, who neither works nor serves his or her own people but forms the class from which the professional agitators, the slum landlords, the liquor sellers, the prostitutes, and other undesirable classes spring".  
(Quoted in Gerhart 1978 p.24)

Aided by the development and entrenchment of apartheid since the 1948 take-over of the National Party, this disposition towards people of colour in the republic has not only survived but been reinforced. Consequently, in the official organ enforcing discriminatory legislation, the SAP, it appears as if this serves as an informal guideline for the performance of their duties:

"There is evidence of incidents of aggression and violence by some members of the police force during the ordinary course of their duties against coloured and black people when there is no need for this to occur; in many cases, the word 'assault' appears to be the correct description of what has taken place...It is clear that in general this kind of aggressive behaviour is not used against white people, and is related to attitudes in the police force towards coloured and black people." (SAIRR 1985b p.1-2)

Given that policemen tend to become enclosed in their own 'subculture' (Bayley & Mendelsohn 1969, Albert 1978, Pinnock 1982), which creates a sharp dichotomy between 'us' and 'them', in South Africa this division has developed along racial lines.

With the SAP having been modelled along European (English) guidelines (Van Onselen 1959), enforcing European laws and values (Roman-Dutch) (Dugard 1978), and certainly being controlled by a 'European' powerstructure, the 'onslaught' is largely perceived as coming from the Black community, domestic and foreign. To this effect, Van Onselen (1959) asserts that the story of the SAP is one of "bravery against savage peoples" (p. 161), and proceeds to explain why the task of the SAP has been so difficult: "They have to deal with a multi-racial society, a large section of which is still partly uncivilized" (p. 7).

#### The Birth of Political Policing

Towards the end of the 1950's, the African National Congress had won major successes in mobilizing a large grassroots support, culminating in the Kliptown Conference in 1955, the anti-pass campaign of 1956 and the defiance campaign of 1959. However, this was increasingly being perceived as a threat to the security of the state, and was met by massive repression. The shootings at Sharpeville at which 43 people died took place in March 1960, the ANC and the PAC were banned shortly afterwards, and for the rest of the decade political dissent was severely punished. At this time, a major restructuring of the SAP took place, with the formation of the Security Branch (SB) and rapidly growing expenditures on 'secret services', and later, the formation of the Bureau for State Security (BOSS) as coordinating and supervising the government's political policing efforts (Pinnock 1982). It was at this point that the focus of the SAP began to be more specific:

"It is not surprising, too, to hear complaints from Africans that the police are not people to be regarded as protectors, but people of whom one should beware...It is their responsibility not only to enforce the laws which regulate South Africa's way of life, but to protect the country from those who wish to subvert that way of life. Increasingly, this has drawn large sections of the SAP into ideological and political matters." (Sachs 1970 p. 38-9)

By the early 1970's, however, after the virtual repressive stamp-out of political opposition to the state in the 1960's, a new generation of blacks had come to maturity, untouched by this repression, which did not fear confronting the might of the state. In the midst of a deepening recession with rising unemployment and housing shortages, grossly inferior and harshly authoritarian conditions in the schools, dissatisfaction rose to the boiling point twice within the space of four years: 1976 and 1980. These years coincided with two further reorganizations within the SAP. In 1976, Riot Squads were introduced on local and divisional levels, under the directives of a national Special Task Force (STF), which had been created to specialize in "urban control" (Pinnock 1982 p.315). And in 1982, following the report of the Rabie commission, the Department of Police was transformed into the Department of Law and Order, which contained a new Directorate for Internal Security. Here, a Director of Internal Security was responsible for the political policing of the republic, directly answerable to the Minister (Pinnock 1982).

In the early 1980's, as we saw above, the reform/repression strategy of the state steamrolled ahead with renewed urgency after the 1980 disturbances, which in some parts of the country

continued into the following year. The sight was set on the institution of the tri-cameral parliament as an important step in showing the government's intention of 'power-sharing'. On paper, the reforms granted "non-whites" executive representation, though on scrutiny this was only to be in an advisory, and 'own affairs' capacity. It was made clear that the reforms were to be implemented at all costs, and that the government would not tolerate any opposition. To this effect, the Minister of Constitutional Planning and Development, Chris Heunis, stated:

"If the communities who seek peace do not find that the systems in which we want them to live function properly, then the security forces must create a system in which this is possible. Therefore, the state must in the interests of reform resort to forceful action".  
(RMG 9/1986, emphasis in original)

### The Geography of Riot Control

In the Cape, a major cornerstone of the 'separate development' reform programme was near completion: the forced removal of blacks and "coloureds" from inner-city areas to sub-economic townships on the Cape Flats under the Group Areas Act. This had begun as a long-term project in town-planning with respect to the future management of the rapidly increasing numbers of "coloureds" and blacks in Cape Town, who, both by procreation and urbanization, would soon outnumber whites. Based on the Howardian concept of "garden cities", albeit in a perverse, local version, the plan envisaged decentralized, self-sufficient residential areas away from the city centre, where the residents could be rejuvenated daily, after their labour of meeting the needs of industrialized society, in a kind of a 'country' setting. However, the Cape Town City Council's plans, proposed in 1947,

did not turn out to be quite as romantic:

"It included ring roads and radials with neat self-contained townships in between - each with its enclosing swath of green belt. The projection was for clusters of inward-looking, mono-class satellites spreading out across the Cape Flats and connected to the inner city by fast highways. Three years later the Group Areas Act was passed, making cluster development compulsory by legislating for race-specific townships surrounded by an empty 'buffer strip'. (Pinnock 1982 p. 141)

Situated around several large industrial areas, these townships were obviously to be the 'modern' and 'efficient' homes of the growing urban black working-class, designed, as they were, "specifically to cater for low-income families" (Hitner & Jenkin 1976 p. 12). As such, they consisted of spartanic two- or three-bedroomed cottages and maisonettes, and were provided with convenient public transport systems to the industrial areas. They were situated on the outer fringes of the city, with the surrounding buffer strips and highway system making inter-township contact difficult for a population lacking the financial resources for the form of conveyance for which the system was conceived: the motor car. Further, the street planning of the townships provided for a minimum of access roads, and the streets "constantly looped back on each other" in order to give the residents a "sense of identity" (presumably as a substitute for that lost in the uprooting caused in the forced removals to the township) (Pinnock 1982 p. 143). Nevertheless, one study of such a township concluded that "the community shows few signs of internal cohesion or actual satisfaction with respect to their residential area" (Hitner & Jenkin 1976 p. 49).

Coincidentally, these features of the townships also made them eminently "policeable architecture" (Pinnock 1982 p.144), following the developing trends and concepts in riot control, by effectively compartmentalizing groups of people into manageable sizes and terrain. Pinnock (1982) quotes a riot policeman as saying: "We can seal these places off in a few minutes, we know all the roads that go in" (p. 144). With all the residents closed into the township, the police can then "use the street layout of the area to manoeuvre the rioters in such a way as to break the mob into smaller and more manageable parcels" (Romer-Heitman 1985 p.31).

#### Policing the 1985/86 Rebellion

##### a) "Dousing fires"

With the state thus obviously having had long term strategies for the containment and control of political dissent, having had several warnings in the form of the 1976 and 1980 uprisings, and according to spokesmen believing in "preparedness" (quoted in Pinnock 1982 p. 315), it nevertheless appears as if the state was not quite prepared for the intensity and breadth on which the 1985/86 rebellion in the Western Cape erupted. Informants have testified to the presence of the SAP at various political meetings and rallies in 1983 and 1984, and were aware of a slight escalation in their operations during the first half of 1985, yet they were convinced that "the cops didn't take us seriously at that time" [3:11].

During the initial period of the unrest in the Cape Town area in 1985, a rapid mobilization of its forces was necessary, but due to the widespread and militant nature of the rebellion, it appears only to have been possible for the SAP to counter with a strategy which can be termed "dousing fires". It can be said to comprise the time from the imposition of the State of Emergency on the 21 of July to mid-September, during which the SAP had to focus

"predominantly on dealing with protest marches, burning barricades, illegal gatherings, searching for and detaining activists, and other tasks that made up political policing. Their attention to policing conventional crimes such as theft, robbery, housebreaking, and the like waned dramatically".  
(Scharf 1988 p. 2)

During this period, with incidents occurring virtually every day which required police monitoring and/or intervention, and frequently 5 or more incidents occurring in different areas, SAP's resources were stretched thin, leaving virtually no manpower for ordinary police work, nor for the inception of a preventative strategy. In addition, the SAP appears at this stage to have had insufficient information regarding the organization of the progressive structures in the various areas and their members to embark on a strategy of prevention. Instead, the SAP had to content itself with combatting unrest on the scene, as the incidents occurred, and to patrol the townships to deter further outbreaks. Intervention was often chaotic or haphazard, indicating the reliance, to a large extent, on a "trial-and-error" mode of operation (Webster 1987), and that the state was not fully in control of the situation (Kruss 1987b). It took



nearly two months for the SAP to orient itself and to engage a higher gear.

b) "Feel it on their bodies"

From mid-September 1985, a different and more ruthless police strategy became increasingly evident in the Western Cape. Hall (1986) has also observed this shift, calling it "punitive policing" (p.16). We should like to suggest that, although the methods were certainly punitive in character, the main objective behind them was intimidation through violence: by letting protesters feel the might of the state 'on their bodies', they were to be deterred from any further involvement in or association with protest or violent activities.

The origins of this strategy can be traced to the shootings at Langa in the Eastern Cape in March 1985, where the SAP, according to MP Helen Suzman, has been "notorious" for heavy-handedness and abuse of powers (Weekly Mail 4/10/88). On 21 of March, a police contingent consisting of 3 Casspirs on township patrol confronted a crowd proceeding from Langa, a black township bordering Uitenhage, to a funeral in Kwanobuhle, a neighboring township. Claiming that they had been stoned by the crowd, which they described as aggressive, and being concerned about protecting the property and lives of (white) Uitenhage residents, to where, they feared, the crowd was headed, the policemen opened fire, killing 20 people and injuring a further 23. Afterwards, it was established that the police were not properly equipped for riot control duty, lacking loudspeakers, teargas, rubber bullets, or

birdshot. Instead, they only carried lethal firearms, R1 rifles, and shotguns with SSG cartridges. Police evidence was contradictory, but it appears that the Uitenhage station commander had issued orders that 'normal' riot control equipment, i.e. teargas, rubber bullets, and birdshot, was not to be issued to Casspirs on township duty after the Port Elizabeth regional police division had been instructed via telex from Pretoria to 'eliminate' individuals in possession of petrol or acid bombs. In his report, the chairman of the appointed commission of enquiry Mr. Justice Kannemeyer concluded:

"One was left with the unhappy feeling that in some police circles the prevailing view was that teargas and, in particular, birdshot were not effective enough and that as violence in the area escalated, somewhere a decision was taken to use stronger measures. Major Blignaut's evidence gives one the impression that he considered that the force used should put the people against whom it is directed out of action - "hulle buite aksie stel" - and that a weapon which would only disperse a crowd or portion of it is not sufficient".  
(Kannemeyer 1985 p. 108, my emphasis)

The Kannemeyer commission came under considerable criticism, however, as it failed to consider the recent pattern of township protests and police reaction as an important background to the shootings, rejected the police version of the stone-throwing attack yet found it necessary to posit that some stones had been thrown, and passively and uncritically accepted the police version of events on several crucial points without any supporting evidence (Haysom 1986b). Furthermore, while it found the fact that 35 of the 43 victims were hit from the rear "disquieting" (Kannemeyer 1985 p. 89), the commission failed entirely to address the issue of the necessity for the police to

fire over 40 rounds of ammunition after the crowd had begun to disperse.

In the Western Cape, this approach of intimidation through excessive and corporal violence was demonstrated in countless incidents during this period, which can be said to stretch from mid-September 1985 to the declaration of the 1986 State of Emergency on the 12 of June. Hall (1986) pinpoints its emergence to September 18, when police wielding quirts and batons took brutal action, again after claims of stoning attacks, against peaceful residents of Valhalla Park. At least one person died and five were injured in the confrontations. Residents maintained however, that the area was quiet, and described policemen as coming charging around street corners and indiscriminately assaulting people going about their daily business (p.16). The same day, an identical operation took place in Elsie's River, and a few days later in Grassy Park and Guguletu.

It appears clear that police actions in these incidents were directed at residents of these areas generally, rather than at anybody they could identify as having been involved in unrest or even in extra-parliamentary political organizations. It seems equally clear that the aim of these actions was showing the residents the might of the state, and what kind of fate they could expect if they dared to challenge it.

"It always happens when the people want to bring to the government's attention their grievances, they send in the police forces and the armies to silence the people. They come in here places, they provoke trouble you know, so you can get cross and want to fight back so they can kill you - I know this." [3:2]

Although October was the most violent month in the Western Cape, with 38 deaths and 1413 incidents of violence recorded (SAIRR 1986 p. 535, 539), the SAP now suddenly had the manpower and resources to also engage in the strategy of 'feel it on their bodies' in addition to that of 'dousing fires', responding to incidents of unrest and violence in various parts of Greater Cape Town. Reinforcements from other parts of the country had been called in (a contingent of Zulu policemen, for instance), and the SAP was now enlisting the help of other branches of the security forces, utilizing them in the broadest sense of the term "the Force" which the Emergency regulations described: the Railways Police, SA Transport Services, and the SADF. However, it appears that the SAP was always in a position of command in relation to these other branches (Argus 6/30/87):

"The army units do not operate autonomously; they are under the direct command of the SA Police. Each army vehicle has a police officer attached to it. This officer becomes acting commander, irrespective of other army rank on board". (Servamus 9/1985 p. 11)

Many other incidents evidenced the intimidatory approach of "feel it on their bodies". In the schools, the police ensured the writing of end-of-year examinations in many "coloured" and black schools at gunpoint, and later made sure that the students were aware of the kind of treatment they could expect if they engaged in political activities: the whippings of pupils at Arcadia in Bonteheuwel, and Silverstream in Manenberg (RMG 9/1986). A President's Council report asserted that the unrest was in large part due to the failure of the Department of Education and Culture to inculcate respect and discipline in the pupils (RMG

21/1987). It would seem, then, that the state took the matter into its own hands and assigned the SAP to instill the respect and discipline by means of physical punishment.

The trend of "feel it on their bodies" was epitomized by a tragic incident towards the end of 1985. On October 15, a truck belonging to the SA Transport Services took several turns in Thornton Road, Athlone to attract the attention of stone-throwers. It had several wooden crates at the back, from which, when the stone attack came on the third drive-through, policemen emerged and opened fire on the crowd, killing three. In the inquest, it was established that the police acted negligently in killing the three, and that the police version of the stone attack was exaggerated (Cape Times 4/3/88).

The 'Trojan Horse' incident can be seen as an instance of the hardening police attitude on 'rioters' and the degree to which corporal punishment must be administered. By hiding in the crates on the back of the state owned truck, and intending to fire on the expected stone-throwers, the police deliberately rigged a trap in which it would demonstrate to the public the measures it was prepared to adopt to quell unrest: to make the figure of the 'onslaught' "feel it" on its black body, imprinting on it a harsh reminder of who is in control and the methods that would be resorted to in order to retain that control.

On the 29th of August, 1985, an incident took place in Kasselsvlei Road in Bellville South at which policemen were ordered to "eliminate" demonstrators (Cape Times 9/9/87). In the

subsequent shooting, one person was killed and two seriously injured, but the policemen were acquitted on murder charges. However, the Attorney General is investigating charges of perjury and defeating the ends of justice against the police brigadier who signed a false unrest report of the incident, and another commanding officer involved in the incident had already been reprimanded by the Supreme Court twice for "heavy-handed and unacceptable conduct", and for using "unreasonable force" in shooting a 14-year old schoolboy in the back when attempting to arrest him (Cape Times 7/6/87).

During the court case of the above mentioned incident, Advocate Veldhagen for the defence said in his closing argument that the accused had fired on the crowd

"to bring home to the troublemakers that from now on they would not know where the police were - just like in the Trojan Horse case - to bring home to them that if they create unrest, they will feel it on their bodies". (RMG 31/1987, my emphasis)

This attitude within the police is more recently exemplified by the informal referring in some centers to riot control equipment as "moering tools" (Cape Times 10/3/88), and the infamous riot police major Odendaal's assertion in court that the simplest way of dealing with the unrest is to shoot to kill every person holding a stone (Cape Times 25/8/88).

#### c) "Prevention"

The imposition of the 1986 State of Emergency on June 12 brought with it a new state approach to the crisis. Noting that the "revolutionary climate was still unsatisfactorily high" (Annual

Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1988 p.1), the government saw it necessary to further beef up the 1985 Emergency Regulations, giving sweeping powers of arrest, detention, and search to the security forces as well as indemnity from prosecution, and imposing stringent restrictions on the reports on any actions by the security forces, in its "attempt to crush growing resistance, and restructure apartheid domination" (Kruss 1987a p. 2). In effect, this meant a further development of its reform/repression approach which was introduced, as we saw above, ten years earlier. The focus now, however, was not only set on suppressing and deterring political protest and resistance, but on preventing political dissent. For the government, much was dependent on the extent to which it would be able to succeed in this endeavour, as it would have a major effect on South Africa's image abroad, and hence on its internal economy.

A whole new security strategy saw the light of day, part of course of the 'total strategy', and began to be implemented. On the surface, this strategy brought a renewed emphasis on 'reform' and included proposals for a National Statutory Council, in which black political and homeland leaders were to be co-opted, the declaration of 'open' trading areas, Central Business Districts (CBD's), and moves to stimulate the economy through incentives and subsidies.

On a more covert level came the introduction of Joint Management Centres (JMC's), as a decentralized way of ensuring proper

maintenance of internal security also on regional and local levels, following the discovery that extra-parliamentary political organizations had become more and more decentralized and were now organizing primarily on a grassroots level. This could be seen as the state's counter-move in the struggle for mass support: the climate was ripe for progressive organizations in their localized mobilization of township residents in that dissatisfaction with living conditions and standards was at a peak while at the same time security force actions in these locations had turned "many black and coloured people, previously uninvolved, strongly against the police, and united parents with their children against the authorities" (SAIRR 1985b p.4). It was therefore necessary for the state to introduce counter-measures, through JMC coordinated campaigns and upgrading schemes.

Convened by the security forces and involving local tricameral parliament representatives, local government authorities and state departments, school principals, teachers, members of PTSA's and the business community, the JMC's coordinated local resources in combatting the "revolutionary climate". Part of a "hearts and minds" campaign, they began upgrading schemes in various townships, tarring roads, providing sidewalks, streetlights, upgrading schools and community halls, and rebuilding sewerage systems, as it was now considered one of the "prerequisites for successful counter-revolution" to demonstrate to the residents that the government was "good" (Weekly Mail 31/7/87).

The SAP, at the same time, engaged in a similar "friendly policeman" campaign. During the 1985/86 rebellion, the SAP



continually emphasized, while allegations of abuse of powers, excessive force, and even collusion with vigilantes poured forth with ever increasing frequency, that they enjoyed a good relationship with the general public, that excesses on the part of policemen would not be tolerated, and that any complaints regarding police behaviour would be thoroughly investigated. Any wrongdoing on the part of the police was rarely, if ever, acknowledged. If anything, the stubborn refusal of the SAP, both in discourse and in action, to respond to the growing concrete criticisms of its methods of operation, and instead shrouding itself in a thickening cloud of secrecy, contributed to its deteriorating image in the eyes of the public.

As a counter-move, in townships around Cape Town, policemen on foot patrols began a different kind of door-to-door operation: typically introducing themselves with the phrase "I'm your friendly policeman, I just want to ask you a few questions" [3:31], they peered into the homes and lives of thousands of township residents in the latter half of 1987. Creating a positive impression was clearly the overt aim of this campaign, but it was also part of an information gathering project, because the questions concerned, among other subjects, where the residents worked, how many people lived in the house, how many children, do they go to school, which school, etc. Residents believed that this information is to be used on future police visits or detention raids, with the intention of locating activists who are on the run, in hiding, etc. (or who may be sleeping in the house the police are searching since they have

become aware that there is a fair amount of inter-sleeping taking place for security reasons) (South 29/10/87).

The emphasis on intelligence, the gathering and documenting of information has been a growing priority of the SAP in the 1980's, because with better inside knowledge it will be better able and better equipped to carry out its political policing. Creating the JMC structures was the last step towards a more encompassing intelligence network, which also entailed recruiting more informers, setting up Special Research- and ad-hoc Riot Investigation Units (SAP 1988), relocating police reservists to affected areas, recording of events at unrest incidents in writing or on video, recording of interrogations and maintaining information on ex-detainees, people on the run, etc., which now had become top priority.

"JMC structures are primarily concerned with gathering intelligence of the political activity in their area. Such intelligence enables the security forces to be more discerning in their use of repression. They are better able to target community leaders and members of progressive organizations. At the same time they seek to identify potentially explosive grievances". (Upfront 8/87)

Thus, the JMC's and the mini-JMC's have become the local structures which guide and instruct the ground-level counter-revolutionary efforts of the SAP, and are now carrying out, on a more encompassing level, the task which the Reaction Units or Riot Squads were specifically designed for. Already in 1982, a riot policeman told Pinnock :

"We also are always gathering information. At every incident you will see someone of the riot squad with a clipboard making notes. We are the eyes and the ears of

the force". (Pinnock 1982 p. 317)

This indicates that the SAP attempted a preventative strategy already before the 1985/86 rebellion, but the breadth and intensity of resistance of that period outdid their resources and prompted a restructuring. The Reaction Units were no longer sufficient for the information gathering requirements to counter the wide-spread resistance that erupted in 1985, so specialized research and large-scale co-option of a wide spectrum of civil servants and individuals in key positions in the various communities had become a priority in order to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and extent of community based grievances and resistance.

Residents in the townships also noted this change in police tactics:

"There was more sophisticated police presence in 1987 than before, and they were relying more on informers and inside information. In 1985/86, they were violent and beating up people; now they have become more selective with detentions and have concentrated more on organizations. They are also concentrating more on surveillance; the video van was present already in '86, but then mainly in connection with demonstrations and unrest. Now it shows up anytime, anywhere." [3:4]

The intention behind this strategy has clearly been the increased gathering of intelligence in order to be able to penetrate local progressive organizations and resistance networks. It could be likened to a 'homing-in' or 'focusing' process whereby the documentation of events, persons involved, their role in organizations, their circle of friends and associations, and the like, form the basis for greater accuracy and efficiency in

targeting wanted individuals, and in conducting the subsequent interrogations, which in turn lead to more accurate information. The SAP has also stepped up their efforts with regard to informers in the various communities and organizations, to the point where they have inside knowledge regarding member- and leadership structures, aims and working goals of the organizations, and advance notice regarding protest activities organized.

### The Official Version

If, in fact, the SAP enjoyed a favourable image in the eyes of the general public, and a positive working relationship with the community at large, surely there would have been no need for the new Commissioner of Police, General Hennie de Witt, to assert that he was aware that "the image of the police had suffered badly" when he took office in April 1987. In an article under the headline "New chief rates police image top priority" (Cape Times 4/8/87), General de Witt was further quoted as saying:

"Upgrading the image of the South African Police...would take time and would depend on the men being better motivated...to provide a better service to the community".

Rather, the official discourse of the SAP must be seen as an attempt, by stubborn and repetitive propaganda, to drive home to the public that the police is good, and that irregularities are attributable to a very small number of over-zealous and irresponsible individuals in the force. It is part of the state's 'language of legitimation' (Posel 1984) and reform-package vocabulary which is meticulously worked out to appear fair and

impartial, emphasizing equal rights and privileges for all population groups, but which is actually separatist and discriminatory, subtly covering up the inequalities and racial disparities which continue to exist.

On the one hand, the state has prevented criticism and commentary on the police through the Emergency Regulations which prohibited reporting of police actions and behavior during unrest, and the Police Act of 1958, which makes it an offence to publish any untrue statement about the police without taking "reasonable" steps to ensure its accuracy. On the other, it is the state's untiring promulgation and proliferation of the type of discourse just mentioned above, which appears to be far removed from the stark reality of the situation in the country and the feelings and perceptions of township dwellers and critically minded suburb-residents alike. A prime example of this type of discourse is the summary of the period under review provided on the opening pages of the 1986-87 Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police. It deserves to be quoted in full:

"The period under review was one on which the South African Police may look back with satisfaction; a period during which the Force has rendered service of a high standard to the Republic of South Africa.

The communist-inspired revolutionary onslaught on the Republic of South Africa has continued under the period under review. It is with some satisfaction that it can be confirmed that there was a decrease in the visible violence of the revolutionary onslaught, compared to the previous period under review. It must be noted, however, that the level of terrorism, revolutionary organising, and intimidation and consequently of the revolutionary climate, is still unsatisfactorily high.

The successes achieved by the South African Police in its by law imposed duties, the improvement of its service to the multi-racial South African community,

and the fact that the order in the community was not only maintained, but maintained in the proper manner, caused the relationship between the police and the public in general to remain sound, and indeed even caused this relationship to be strengthened. It is noted with gratitude that this applies especially to the relationships between members of the Force and the Black, Coloured, and Asian population groups who were, and still are, subjected to a continuous propaganda onslaught aimed at separating the Police and the community". (Annual Report of the Commissioner of the South African Police 1988 p. 1-2)

This statement can certainly not be seen to be in agreement with opposition parties in parliament, which criticized police behaviour vociferously and contended that the police were antagonizing township residents, provoking violence, and abusing their powers; nor with independent observers, who concluded that "there exists a very deep rift between black and coloured communities and the police" (SAIRR 1985b p.4); nor township residents themselves, who contended that they were virtually under a state of siege with the SAP and the SADF occupying their residential areas. However, it is consistent with the government's attempts at covering up the crisis, and the Commissioner's assertion that challenging the authority of the state will not be tolerated (SAIRR 1981, p. 231).

The total absence of indications that the state has even a theoretical understanding of the origins and aims of the kinds of protest activities which have become widespread since 1985 gives the impression that it attempts to disclaim all responsibility for the conditions which initially sparked the unrest, central to Black grievances. One claims that "riots and terrorism" are not the only alternatives to the South African situation, where, for

a large majority of the population, legal political activity is only "supposedly suppressed"; rather one condemns riots as totally and utterly unacceptable chiefly because 'innocent people' will be affected:

"No riot is in any way acceptable, quite simply because it almost inevitably visits some measure of violence on the persons or property of people who have nothing to do with the riot or the dissatisfactions behind it."  
(Romer-Heitman 1985, p. 32.)

### Criminalization of Political Action

By its emphasis on the "by law imposed duties", the Police Commissioner's statement above also signifies another aspect of state security strategy. While naked and violent repression, and the detention of children were the main eyesores which brought down the wrath of the international community, the 1980's has seen an increasing trend towards the criminalization of political action.

"Increasing criminalization of political action is the justification for use of force and the rule of law against protesters and the orchestration of public fear which feeds into the control apparatus at a higher level. (Pinnock 1982 p.)

In other words, it serves as the smoke-screen behind which the state can hide its continued efforts to thwart political opposition by removing political activists and thereby also disrupting political organizations, and constantly fuelling the public fear which serves as a deterrent to active involvement in opposition and protest activities. Coupled with praise for the South African courts, "which enjoy the status of world-wide recognition to be integrous" (Servamus 1/86 p. 26), the state continues to hammer home the impression that political activists

are law-breakers and engaged in 'illegal' activities.

At the same time, detainees have increasingly been charged with "minor or even frivolous charges" (Coleman & Webster 1986 p. 120), in order to satisfy international critics of the praxis of detention without trial. In 1983, 15% of all detainees were charged, and 43% of them convicted, while in 1984, 62% of the detainees were charged but only 1,2% were convicted (ibid.). Since the 1985 rebellion, the number of individuals on charges of public violence has increased dramatically, while, here as well, the conviction rate has dropped significantly. Between 1984/5 and 1985/6, the number of prosecutions increased by 396% while the number of convictions only increased by 290%. The conviction rate thus dropped by 15% from 56% to 41% (RMG 4/1987). This trend was also noted by the Black Sash's Court Monitoring Group, which concluded that:

"What is clear from our figures, where over 80% of those accused are either found not guilty or the charges against them are withdrawn, is that very large numbers of innocent people are arrested in random fashion and charged on flimsy evidence that cannot stand up to examination in court". (Black Sash 1987 p. 4)

The Black Sash further noted that a large number of those accused alleged assault on arrest, that sentences were often inappropriately harsh in relation to the offence, and that 42% of those accused were juveniles under the age of 18. However, it makes sense in the context of the state's attempt at deterring individuals from engaging in political activities. With the central role students and youth played in the 1985/86 rebellion,



it appears as if the state saw it fit to set examples with youth and school children to prevent the recurrence of this rebellion in the future.

Though it has come under considerable criticism for its punishment and detention of children, the state has countered with a renewed propaganda campaign. In 1985, the SAP issued a statement to the effect that the dilemma it faced was that

"a large number of mobs responsible for all kinds of violence and other unrest-related lawless acts, consisted of children. The police said that faced by these 'mobs' they were often forced to take drastic action and then were criticized for having injured or arrested youths". (SAIRR 1986 p. 443)

More recently, the SAP, in conjunction with the Bureau for Information, issued a booklet which gave the 'facts' about children in detention, entitled "The Young Revolutionaries". Here the youths involved in the 1985/86 rebellion were portrayed as innocent victims of ideological exploitation by exiled revolutionary movements. By maintaining that the incarcerated children have been lured to commit "atrocities" by these revolutionary forces in order to make the country ungovernable, which have "seized upon the "grievances" of Black communities to further this end" (Bureau for Information 1988, p. 5), the authors, by the stroke of a pen, managed to negate the existence of real grievances on the part of Blacks other than those 'fabricated' by exiled revolutionary movements, as well as to justify the type and severity of the punishment meted out to the children. As we shall see in the following chapter, the detention without trial of children has been the central factor in creating

the climate and experiences this study has sought to document and describe.

In summary, this chapter has briefly outlined a historical account of the policing methods of the SAP within the apartheid context. We saw that a basic racist attitude underlay the enforcement of discriminatory legislation, which has had the effect of creating a hostile social environment for those to whom they applied, detrimental to essential prerequisites for sound and harmonious psychological development. "Hard" and ruthlessly efficient methods, often brutal in their application, were the main components in creating the climate of fear and unpredictability which increasingly has become focused not only on the Black population in general but the actively dissenting members of the Black community specifically. Progressively more encompassing and repressive political policing strategies have followed intensive civil unrest, part of a 'total' strategy aimed at perpetuating white domination in South Africa under a modern, more internationally acceptable, and less obviously exploitative guise.

Since the eruption of the present crisis in 1984, state efforts have become even more concerted, through the rigorous application of a reform/repression dyad which has included co-optive incentives coupled with heavy-handed and intimidatory repression, to push its reform programme through while suppressing protest and attempting to eradicate political resistance. From a psychological perspective, simply the existence of discriminatory practices is sufficient to create stress and maladaptive

responses; we may infer then that their rigid and brutal application, coupled with the systematic and ever-improving efforts of the control apparatus in extinguishing any opposition or resistance to it, will have much more drastic results.

### The Psychological Sequelae of Repression in South Africa

In South Africa, relatively little work has been carried out to examine the psychological sequelae of intensive civil unrest, violence, and the persecutory climate engineered by the state to root out political resistance and opposition. The public has nevertheless been warned of the "deleterious effects on the mental health of all arising from escalating and continuing violence and associated psychological distress" (Argus 9/9/87), but so far very little has actually been done to establish HOW these occur.

To date only a handful of studies have been carried out (Dawes 1986, Richman 1986, Skinner 1986, Gibson 1986, Bloch 1986, DTT/OASSSA 1987, Dawes and de Villiers 1987, Foster 1987, Cleaver 1987, Scheepers 1988, Shefer and Hofmeyer 1988). Some of these concern the psychological effects of detention and the use of physical and psychological forms of torture during this form of incarceration (Bloch 1986, Foster 1987). Others focus on the psychological sequelae of civil unrest and violence in children, with clinical manifestations in relation to stress theory as the explanatory framework (Gibson 1986, Richman 1986, Skinner 1986). More recently, a number of studies have adopted a more explicitly

social psychological and qualitative approach, where the context of political repression has provided the backdrop for descriptions and analyses of subjective experiences of extremely stressful situations as a result of the violent, repressive and persecutory climate, and which have explicated the personal dimension of these experiences (Cleaver 1987, Scheepers 1988, Shefer and Hofmeyer 1988).

One of the reasons for the scarcity of research in this area has been the difficulty for the researcher to access these phenomena. Significantly, it was primarily clinicians who had direct access to glimpses of the experiences of township residents during a period of intensive social turmoil, from which we could begin to understand the reality of the day-to-day conditions in these locations and their naked impact.

"Although stress was felt in the entire population during the state of emergency, black communities suffered very severely. Black residential areas were virtually occupied by security forces, and individuals, including children, were vulnerable to arbitrary arrest, detention, assault, injury, and even torture or death. The education system was severely disrupted, and movement on the streets was frequently hazardous. Detention, injury, and deaths in the community led to a range of crisis reactions, and many families were split by conflict over these events." (Swartz et. al. 1986 p. 133)

By pooling and analysing some of this data, a grouping of mental health professionals, DTT/OASSSA, issued a pamphlet entitled "Repression and Stress" with the aim of informing and empowering affected communities to recognize and deal with apartheid- and unrest-related psychological stress. While it is not an academic presentation, it provides a more detailed understanding of

stressors in the townships and their effects.

"Poverty, unemployment, discrimination and repression have led to serious problems and crises in people's lives. Since 1984, the people have fought these things more strongly than ever before. The government's response was to declare a State of Emergency. This has made life even harder with

- \*continual police and army presence in the townships

- \*detentions

- \*corruption and divisions in the community

- \*increased unemployment

- \*sexual abuse

All of these things deeply affect people's lives, their mental well-being and health, deeply. They are very stressful experiences". (DTT/OASSSA 1987 p. 1)

It goes on to outline 10 specific stressors in the daily lives of township residents in the context of the current social climate, all of which, it concludes, "create fear among people who wish to be actively involved in the struggles of the community" (ibid. p. 6). It thereafter launches into a description of the kinds of responses, less and more severe, which are characteristic of individuals in stressful situations, in order for family and friends to be able to identify these and, if necessary, consult professional assistance.

However, because of a lack of detailed research concerning the concrete ways in which the stressors have affected individuals and families, it is not possible to be more specific in the outlining of the stressors, nor of their effects. The present study has sought to begin mapping some of these concrete ways, and thereby to further understanding of their impact on every-day life in the township, the kinds of responses they have evoked and the ways in which they have contributed to personal transformations on the part of the residents. We will now turn to

look at some specific stressors in the township, and the ways in which they have affected daily life for their inhabitants.

While we do so, it may be worth keeping in mind Western's (1981) question of whether or not apartheid generally and Group Areas specifically may in fact have had the reverse effect than desired, and instead not only worsened race relations, but have undermined "the security of that shrinking minority of the inhabitants of South Africa who are white":

"It is the question of the role of Group Areas in maintaining apartheid: are Group Areas functional or do they of themselves engender stresses that will be dysfunctional for apartheid?" (Western 1981 p. 227, emphasis in original)

## CHAPTER 4

### STRESSORS IN THE COMMUNITY

#### Introduction

With the increasing dissent seen on the Cape Flats since late 1984, the security forces stepped up their presence and rate of intervention in these areas. Justifying its actions, the SAP claimed that it was necessary to maintain an intensive presence in the townships in order to safeguard "law and order" and to bring the State of Emergency to an end. This was consistent with its claim that unrest was the product of a small number of "communist instigators" who deliberately incited the masses to rebel against the state (Cape Times 22/10/85).

However, government critics and progressive organizations generally contended that their supporters and members were against this presence and that in fact it served to provoke and aggravate township residents, and thereby to fuel confrontations between demonstrators and the police. Thus, towards the end of 1985, the End Conscription Campaign launched a "Troops Out of the Townships" campaign, and during the following year, this was made a condition by an increasing number of UDF-affiliated organizations for participating in negotiations regarding the future of South Africa (other conditions included the release of all political detainees, and an end to the State of Emergency, etc.).

In parliament, opposition to the government's way of handling the crisis came from the PFP, and particularly from its spokesperson

on Law and Order, Helen Suzman. She claimed that the intensive police presence was, to a large extent, the cause of unrest, and exposed instances of indiscriminate violence perpetrated on innocent township residents to support her claims (Cape Times 14/9/85). This also had the result of giving the SAP a massively negative public image.

Independent observers also concurred with this opinion. In November 1985, the South African Institute of Race Relations observed that

"...the mere presence of police (in the townships) - particularly when patrolling the Casspirs - appears often to have been sufficient to spark off unrest." (SAIRR 1985b p. 4)

#### Police Presence

In direct sense, the intensification of police presence and action has had a severe effect on daily life in the townships. Although it is accepted that police have traditionally had a reputation for heavy handedness in South Africa, especially in relation to 'non-white' citizens (Stone 1972, The Star 23/11/87), since the eruption of the present crisis in 1984, this kind of treatment has intensified, and become specifically applied to those engaged in extra-parliamentary political opposition to the state. In other words, this intensification of police repression shifted from a criminal to a civil sphere, and was also increasingly applied to activists operating on a local level, as opposed to national or regional political leaders. This can further be traced to the development of a specially trained Riot Squad or Reaction Unit, whose primary task was that of monitoring



and intervening in increasingly militant dissent (Pinnock 1982).

This has been the experience of my informants as well. In the words of one:

"Even this thing with troops and riot police is quite a new thing. The first Casspir (on township duty) I saw was in 1985. Before that, police used to be present at rallies and stuff, and come to various meetings to check up on what's going on, but they were normal cops, not riot squad or even security police. Sure there were security police and that around and involved in these things at that time, but they thought of it more as a joke. We also didn't take them seriously at that time. In fact, we used to chuck the cops out of the meetings ourselves - aunties standing up and shouting that they must get out and close the door behind them. They were really militant at that time". [4:1]

According to my informant, the transformation in police tactics coincided with a shift in local progressive politics. When local political organizations attempted to broaden their focus from specific, bread-and-butter issues (like housing and amenities, removals, etc.) to broader, general political demands, the police tactics also changed. After a period of increased monitoring, the stepping up of the involvement of the security branch on the local level, and the deployment of the Reaction Unit, came the violently repressive and often indiscriminately applied response of 1985/86.

Since youth and students were most often the driving forces behind localized political organizations, a great deal of police action was centered on these groups. For their parents, this came in most cases as a tremendous shock, making fear and worry a permanent feature of their everyday lives. They came to have a general sense of the police violating their personal privacy

through their continual presence in their residential areas, and through what the parents perceived to be malicious, intentional harrassment of people (particularly youth) in the community. In this way, the police punctuated these parents' lives, and put them in a position where they had to fear for their childrens' safety and health 24 hours per day, to the extent that this has now become one of the primary preoccupations in their everyday lives.

"I thought to myself that things were really getting bad. After that, they sort of took over the township. I saw them pick up the children for questioning and detention, and we were not free to walk around the area anymore." [4:2]

#### Police Presence: Effects on Parents' Everyday Lives

If one considers the fact that the oppressive aspect of the South African situation consists of the discrimination against and exploitation of a black majority population, and the coercion of an increasingly militant working-class squeezed together in massive, sub-standard, sub-economic, easily controlled housing areas (or townships), there appears to exist a sufficiently unjust situation, easily fomenting negative consequences and attitudes in the long term. If we then add the systematic and often brutal persecution of children who express dissatisfaction with and opposition to the state in this situation, we have a pattern which surely must affect the lives of their parents. We can even assume that these parents will come to have an increasingly negative view of the country's leadership. Here we want to demonstrate that it has radical effects also on a concrete day-to-day, short-term, level, and will elucidate two

examples of this.

1) Parents are living in a state of anticipating police presence in their area; whether or not the area is in a state of upheaval or unrest, parents are nevertheless anticipating police presence and intervention, as it is perceived to be part of a strategy of intentional harrassment and abuse. It is as if the parents are in a permanent state of readiness, and interpret certain signs to judge whether the situation is calm or whether there is cause for alarm, for security measures, or for prevention. If there are no signs of action or unrest in the area, the police are still possible expected on a) patrol, b) a mission to detain someone (on the run) or to take someone away for for questioning, or c) purely harrassment missions. The parents are therefore (even if still carrying out daily activities) always on the lookout, particularly if their own child is a member of his/her schools' Students' Representative Council (SRC), on the run, or in some way involved in student/youth political activities.

In that case, the parents themselves often actively engage in information gathering projects concerning protest- or other activities in the area, at the school for example, or at the town centre, which may precipitate police presence or action. If there are no such messages coming through, the parent may carry on with the daily routine in a state of "normal" preparedness. If there are such messages of activity in the area, the parent may enter a state of active readiness. This may entail taking up a position of surveillance, passing on messages concerning activities and

police movements to other families, or taking smaller children from the street indoors.

In a case of heavy police presence in the area and /or unrest, parents immediately enter a state of active readiness, which may very quickly be transformed into taking preventative measures. Immediately, if conditions permit, parents take up a position of surveillance, which depends on the physical and spatial location and the design of the dwelling, as well as on the immediate intensity of police action. Parents do experience a compulsion to monitor police actions in the area, and if at all possible, they go outside "to see what they are doing" [4:3]. The police will be watched for as long as possible, and extended movements to continue monitoring the police will be taken if required and deemed within the limits of safety.

If action is known to be taking place in the vicinity, the parents, in addition to attempting to visually monitor the situation, will take further steps. One may open the front door as well as the front gate "so that the children can run in if they are being chased" [4:4]. In fact, the whole house (i.e. back doors and gates as well) is opened up so that if a child (anyone's child, not necessarily one's own) runs into the home, s/he can escape through the backyard and not be trapped when policemen are in pursuit. Parents may also make a physical inspection of the house, wake up activists who may be temporary or semi-permanent 'guests' so that they can leave before the police come searching the house, or remove literature or posters which could be banned or indicate that family members are

involved.

The parent may also take preventative measures in terms of the possibility of teargas being fired. A bucket of water and cloths are prepared and placed in an easily accessible place so that if persons who have been affected by teargas come to the house, immediate relief is available.

2) Parents are finding themselves structuring their daily activities around this state of anticipating police presence: Here I am particularly referring to housewives who spend most of their days in the area, but it also affects working parents. In a very real sense, the possibility of police presence and action takes a priority in people's lives to a point where routine activities such as housework and shopping are structured so as to give maximum opportunity to be free if and when it does happen, and to go shopping when the risk is minimal of encountering 'trouble' on the way. As soon as the husband has gone to work, and the children have gone off to school, parents get going with domestic routines so that if police arrive in the area during the day, the disruption of these activities will be minimal. One parent described her activities to me in this way:

"As soon as I see them stopping somewhere here nearby, I have to stop whatever I'm doing to go outside to see what's going on and what they are doing... then when you're finished, you come in to continue whatever you were doing, then you're on your nerves. You do a little bit of this, then you go outside again to check what they are doing, then you come inside and do a little bit of that, then you check on them again ... That's why I try not to get involved in the mornings. That's the time that I do my work; you'll see that the washing is washed, the food is cooking there in the kitchen. But when I'm finished

with my work, usually by twelve o'clock or half past twelve,, I'm always sitting here in this chair and crochet with my door open, and the minute they do something funny, I phone (someone) to let them know." [4:5]

In similar ways, other housewives in the area have organized their lives around a certain anticipation of things to come. Having found it virtually impossible to concentrate on their duties during police presence and action in the area, these are ways in which they have had to adjust their personal lives and their use of time. Initially, when the first waves of intensive police action took place, the entire area was in a state of chaos and peoples' lives revolved almost entirely around this fact. The main portion of parents' day-to-day existence consisted of attempts at keeping abreast of and coping with the situation; monitoring unrest and police action, finding out and spreading the message of what had happened to students and activists who had been pursued or picked up by the police, contacting lawyers or relief organizations such as Dependants' Conference (DC) or the Repression Monitoring Group (RMG), and keeping up with daily events and reactions in the community. Despite the full-time effort by most people involved, the state of communication and support networks in the area deteriorated, which further exacerbated its perceived impact on the residents.

### Police Visits

Since the inception of heavy police presence in Cape Flats townships, more and more households have been subjected to being searched by police patrols, often consisting of 10 or more heavily armed members of the Reaction Unit. This has especially

been the case since 1986, when the Security Police's information system improved. Due to the intensive documentation of sessions of interrogation of Security and State of Emergency detainees, and questioning of student and youth leaders and members, SRC representatives, suspects of public violence crimes, or individuals simply suspected of involvement in extra-parliamentary political groupings, the police's body of information regarding the structure and composition of the local political organizations has been greatly improved. In addition, video filming of activists, observation and note taking in the field of known activists' social and 'professional' relations, as well as information supplied by police informers, have also contributed to this by now vast body of information.

Consequently, the police have gained access to detailed information regarding local political leaders and their activities; knowledge of their residence, their circle of friends and associations, their regular hang-outs, etc. Thus, if the objective is to apprehend someone, arrest someone for questioning, to harass a particular person or his/her family, to intimidate someone, or to look for clues in someone's home, literature or other items which could shed light on important plans or events in an area, the police now have this information at their disposal. Previously, they were in a situation (when massive unrest and political protest suddenly erupted) to have to combat unrest situations as they occurred at same time as they were trying to map the (underground) political network with which they were dealing. In other words, when the national State of

Emergency was imposed in June 1986, the police had already laid a substantial groundwork, through their intelligence efforts and the mass detentions and arrests during the 1985/86 State of Emergency, for the mapping of local resistance networks, and could now begin to work according to a preventative strategy.

By virtue of these modes of operation, parents of political activists have in the past four years been subjected to frequent and stressful police visits to their homes. These have sometimes occurred very frequently and intensively for several weeks, then no visits at all for months, after which another burst of visits erupts. Certainly, these bursts could be seen as bearing a relationship to intensive periods of public violence in various areas, and other expressions of political protest. For example, on May Day 1987, a post office and police van were petrol bombed in a certain area, and a police officer, who however escaped unharmed, was chased down the road by an angry mob, and in the weeks following these incidents, homes were visited by the police, hunting for youths and students whom they suspected of having been involved in perpetrating them. Their efforts continued for several months; in fact, as late as October 1987, the police were still visiting homes and giving these incidents as reasons for their visits.

While parents have elaborated on the experience of having their homes visited and searched by the police as extremely stressful and upsetting, there is evidence to suggest that a certain process of desensitization takes place with repeated visits. The parents thereby find it gradually less difficult to resist the



intimidatory approach of the police, and are better able to appear unaffected at the time of the visit, leading to a gradual loss of initiative, relatively speaking, on the part of the police in the confrontation situation. It has also been found that the repeated confrontations with the police contribute to the development of the fiercely resistant attitude on the part of the parents; this will be more thoroughly elaborated in following chapters.

However, this does not necessarily mean that there is a reduction in the experienced stress level on the part of the parents, as the (post-traumatic) shock-resembling after-effect appears to remain very much the same. We will explore these questions further as we will now go into a detailed analysis of the structure of the event of having one's house visited by the police.

#### Police Visits: Structure of the Event

While the experience of having one's house visited by the police (or searched by a large police contingent) is a highly complex event, there are nevertheless certain identifiable components. These will now be elaborated, and followed by an analysis of the most stressful aspects of the event as perceived by the parents.

It is apparent that a complex 'culture' exists around the phenomenon of a police visit to one's house, at least in this context of politically motivated persecution and harassment, and in the following, we will only be able to glean some details concerning its basic structure. This process requires much more detailed research in order to fully understand it and appreciate

its impact on the victims.

1) Initial Shock: This stage can be said to encompass the parents' experience from the time they become aware that police have arrived at their house with the intention of searching the house or detaining/arresting/taking away a family member, to the time that the door is opened and there is face to face confrontation. There is an intense surprise and shock at the realization of the arrival of the police, which is always present despite virtually all parents with children involved in political activities constantly preparing themselves for this event. Thus, from the time that the parents become aware of the childrens' activities, there is a mental preparation and anticipation of the visit, which is based on their knowledge of the state's treatment of individuals in this situation, as well as on the awareness of the experiences of other activists and their parents in their own area, the children being the primary channel of communication in this instance.

While shock and surprise characterize the parents' response, the prevailing state of mind can be said to be fear and worry. Parents are often momentarily paralyzed with fear at the discovery of the arrival of the police, and immediately thereafter launch into a burst of frenetic, even irrational, nervous activity, before entering into the unavoidable face-to-face confrontation. During the momentary paralysis, certain details come to the fore: the safety of children in the house, both one's own children and others'. For example, are there

children in the house that are on the run? That could potentially be subject to detention? Are other wanted activists, friends and comrades of one's children, sleeping in the house? The issue of one's own safety also arises: Are they heavily armed? Are they going to force their way in? Are there any undesirable or banned objects in the house that must be removed? As these possibilities are hurriedly considered, the momentary paralysis comes to an end and is replaced by frenetic action to remedy the fear-evoking possibilities.

Direct observation has yielded views of entire families nervously scurrying about the house, making sure that the danger elements are removed or hidden. Children are woken and (if possible; i.e. the house is not surrounded) virtually pushed out the back to escape over tin fences and through backyards, and literature and other materials (pamphlets, lists, phonenumber, etc.) are thrown away or hidden. However, it is far from always that these people and/or objects are disposed of satisfactorily, giving rise to fear and worry throughout the visit. In any event, what the police will do during their visit is unpredictable, making it impossible for the parents to anticipate the imminent visit with a guilt-free confidence. (This, by the way, is a major component of this phase; a strong feeling of guilt, or of having violated the rules for which their enforcers have come to punish them. Already, the subculture to which the parents belong is one which public opinion and establishment values scorn and portray as undesirable - to belong to it and be confronted with the embodiments of these views immediately gives

rise to a strong sense of guilt.) Other accounts have told of parents rushing around the house while stalling the police outside the door, hiding their children or their belongings as if it was a matter of life and death. Sometimes, it is also described as feeling as if in a hopeless situation and being at a loss as to what to do, yet needing to engage in activity as an outlet for all the created nervous energy.

2) The Confrontation: It is evident both from interviews and direct observation, that the moment the parents are confronted with the police, face-to-face at the open door, there is a transformation taking place. "Once they're in the house, I become strong, like a different person" [4:6]. It is as if there is a distinct change of personality, a visible alteration in demeanor, by virtue of the face-to-face confrontation. The fidgety nervousness and the frenzied scurrying have vanished, and have been replaced by a calm, obstinately resistant attitude. If fear is present, it is not evident; the policemen's demands and aggressive approach are countered with a confident, fierce resistance. In many cases, the parents are behaving in a way which is an embodiment of their stout appearance, and which is often intimidating to the policemen. These big, solid, and unbudging women with their stern facial expressions and aptitude for razor-sharp, disarming retorts are often capable of derailing the intimidatory approach of the police. With repeated exposures to the situation, and a growing awareness of the policemen's reliance of the strength of the intimidation for control in the situation, the parents have been able to assume more control and

confidence in the confrontation.

In some cases, we have seen parents who regress into the nervous, fearsome, and indecisive state while out of visual and auditory range of the policemen, although they still remain in the house. When the parent left the room to again confront the police, or the policemen entered the room where the parent was, she would instantaneously stop shaking, wailing, complaining, or blabber nervously, and would return to the assured, confrontative mode. In this state, parents have also confessed to performing uncharacteristic acts, such as telling the police blatant lies with a straight face, something they would normally not be able to do.

"There is one thing that I just can't stand, and that's telling lies, but when the cops are here I just lie without even thinking about what I'm telling them. (mimicking): 'Are you sick auntie? Yeees, I've an asthma attack'. And there I'm lying in bed with the pump and everything, all the while I'm only trying to hide my son who's under me in the bed (laughter). It just comes to me; under normal circumstances, I wouldn't be able to lie people straight in the face like that, I can't stand it." [4:7]

Also, parents appear to be in an extremely clearheaded state, and can make fast decisions which have important consequences; for example, give instantaneous replies in a very confident manner so that the policeman would disregard a possibility which would reveal a hidden family member.

"When I'm facing them, I don't even have to think. I answer them straight from the top of my head, and I know what to say to them, and that what comes out is the right thing. It's like I'm on automatic; I believe that in moments like that, Allah gives you strength to go through it without thinking about what you're doing or saying, it just goes." [4:8]

3) The Aftershock: When the police leave the house, the parents have reached the peak of their 'manic' state, and as soon as they are sure that the police have driven away, a release of tension takes place, which resembles a discharge and leads to a physical collapse. The parent is exhausted and collapses into a chair or sofa. This is accompanied by exclamations such as "Oh my God, I can't handle this"[4:9] or "O Here, this is too much"[4:10], which indicate that the parent feels s/he has been exposed to an excessively stressful situation.

A verbal diarrhea of sort follows this, as the parent quickly recovers strength, and everyone in the house takes part in sharing their experience and impressions of the event, although the parents, or those who are most directly affected by it, are those who dominate the interaction. Here the participants are attempting to interpret and evaluate what just happened and at the same time allowing it to sink into acceptance. It is an intense exchange, where people are talking on top of each other, and won't stop even though they notice that others are talking simultaneously; rather, they just attempt to find someone else who is willing to listen. Parents appear unconcerned about themselves, mainly being worried about other family members (if they were taken away especially, but also children who may have had to use an escape route - it is as yet unknown whether or not they got caught) and their story; what they might have said to the police. In all the tension and confusion they are no longer certain of what information they divulged and what they withheld,

which gives rise to continued feelings of anxiety and tension. They feel as though the tactics the police used during the visit put them off balance and possibly made them reveal things they weren't supposed to, although during the visit itself they experienced it as though they were in control of the situation. This possibility lingers on as a source of anxiety (especially in moments of solitude and reflection) for several days after the visit.

4) The Slowing-Down: By now (approximately 30-40 minutes after the police left the house), all the participants have exhausted their immediate need to verbalize their experience and thereby give outlet to their tensions, and a natural slowing-down of the interaction (in intensity) takes place. the family members can now be more certain that the police are gone for now, and that they are out of danger for the moment. They can enter into state of more complete relaxation, and may begin to relate the particularly funny, shocking, angering, or ironical aspects of the experience, reaffirming their own position as against that of the police and the state apparatus in general, and thereby solidifying the groups' solidarity with respect to the outgroup. For example, one may reiterate impressions such as "how stupid they were", overlooking an item or mistaking a wanted person for someone else, to come to a positive own group affirmation "how clever we were"[4:11] or "how lucky we were" [4:12]. In essence, the objective here is to affirm to oneself and others that one's own group is intact and has not lost any of its capacity for resistance despite, or possibly precisely because of, the efforts

of the outgroup, in this case their hated persecutors, the police. During this phase, it is evident that to deal with and properly dwell on the experience has top priority, whether or not this is a conscious judgement. Other activities have lost significance in comparison, or they are simply forgotten or postponed indefinitely.

5) Focus on Self: The rap-session and slowing-down process together take over an hour, then returns a need to get busy with personal issues again. The parents attempt to regain their bearings and assess what they must do now. However, as they have been through a traumatic experience, the first concern is personal hygiene, i.e. a shower, wash, a change of clothes, etc., then it becomes important to replenish one's energy supply so that a cup of tea, a sandwich or a snack is called for, before it is possible to return to those activities that were of concern before the visit. Parents may also engage in new activities which time of day or other circumstances prescribe (previous commitments, etc.).

6) Reiteration: As the news of the incident spreads by word of mouth in the area, people come to visit the house to find out the details of the police visit. The rap-session thereby resumes with non-participants, and the story is retold from beginning to end. This functions as a sort of affirming regurgitation of the event, whereby the courageous behaviour of the participants towards the police is highlighted, and the shortcomings or mistakes of the police are emphasized, which further reinforces the in-group - out-group division. The particular offensive or reprehensible



acts or words of the policemen are also emphasized, which further strengthens the ingroup's perception of the police as malicious persecutors of themselves, deliberately harrassing them.

However, the experience is relayed in such a way as to portray its character as a tremendously exciting (although frightening and nerve-racking) adventure from which they escaped narrowly yet unscathed. It reveals the post-facto thriving that is experienced by the parents: it is as if they were involved in a dramatic battle (though no 'fighting' took place and no 'blood' was shed) which they survived. This is experienced as really 'being involved' in the struggle.

It is also in many ways portrayed as a 'jol', particularly by younger family members and especially if the police left the house 'emptyhanded'. In that case, the whole event is portrayed as a "victory" over "the enemy"[4:13], which has become the customary way of referring to the police by younger committed activists. They are also very interested to hear about the parents' experience, and to compare it with their own previous experiences, as it serves to reaffirm one's own beliefs and opinions, as well as to strategize and anticipate one's own potential behaviour in a similar situation. For the parents, however, it is an occasion at which it is possible to reconstruct the experience of tremendous fear and anxiety in the situation, and to express their horror at its potential reoccurrence.

#### Police Visits: Particularly Stressful Aspects of Event

Parents have experienced a number of features of the event of

having their homes visited by police as particularly stressful. These are all related to the behaviour of the policemen in the situation, and include their approach to the parents, their display of arms, their manners and way of addressing the parents in interaction. They also concern the policemen's way of speaking about the children, the reasons why they are looking for them and the offences they have allegedly committed, as well as the actions against the children they are threatening to take once they find them. These particularly stressful aspects will now be discussed in some detail.

1) Overzealousness: A very prominent feature of the police visits, reported by each and every parent interviewed, is the perceived overzealousness of the policemen who come to search the house. This basically refers to the use of excessive force in several ways, if we consider that in most cases the police come to look for a young teenager, a school-child, and the parents are middle-aged. Firstly, it concerns the 'SWAT-team' approach when a squad of 10 or more policemen descend on the dwelling from various directions. The house is basically surrounded before contact with the occupants is made, and not infrequently, the roof of the house is also covered:

"The third time they came, they came over the roof as well. I really got a fright that time, hearing them on the roof. They came at about 5 in the morning, and that's the time when you're sleeping best, and you wake up to hear footsteps on the roof. It sounded like rocks falling on the roof. They didn't even knock either, and they came through the front and back doors at the same time. Shooo, it was a fright!"[4:14]

Naturally, to be woken by the sound of footsteps on the roof in the middle of the night, and the parents know that it can only be the police, is experienced as a source of stress and fear for the parents, who perceive this show of force as unnecessary and intimidatory.

Secondly, the show of force is also evident from the amount of manpower employed at these visits. Parents have described their homes as being "full of policemen"[4:15], often more than 10 of them in the house at one time. The upper limit of men used on a single visit appears to be 15 or 16 policemen in a two or three-roomed maisonette. Not only is this sheer presence intimidatory, part of the strategy of attempting to confuse and scare parents into making admissions or divulging information which they are seeking, but it is also part of an entire strategy to sow fear and division within the families by attempting to hammer home the impression that the activists are 'terrorists', 'criminals' and 'enemies of the state'.

Thirdly, a number of other details complete this concept. The police arrive at these visits in virtual caravans of vehicles. Not infrequently are several cars and vans seen parked outside the house, which perpetuates the idea of the dangerousness of the person sought, as well as the seriousness with which the state regards this case. They are usually heavily armed, using shotguns, R4 semiautomatic rifles, bullet proof vests, drawn pistols, etc. The arms are prominently displayed, and always held between themselves and the parents as a sign of strength and authority.

Finally, the manner of searching the house also perpetrates this concept. The policemen go through the house as if engaged in urban warfare; guns drawn and rifles pointing while searching, going around corners and doors as if an armed enemy is hiding on the other side, and looking into dark corners and cupboards with barrel pointing in case of a sudden surprise.

"When I opened the door to let them in, they rushed in and pushed me aside. They had big guns in their hands. There must have been about 16 of them in the house because the whole house was full. They looked everywhere, turned things upside down, and went through all our things. They were looking with their guns ready, as if my son was a dangerous criminal, like they were going to shoot him as soon as they saw his face". [4:16]

2) Manner: It is a widespread and accepted opinion amongst these parents that the police are "rude bastards"[4:17]. In fact, when a parent has realized that the police have decided to visit their home in search of activists and/or information, they prepare themselves to cope with this stressful aspect, because the policemen are expected to behave rudely.

"Yes, they is (sic) rude when they come here. If my wife tells them that (our son) isn't here, they'll point in her face and say 'she's a liar'. We are used to it now; they don't know what kind of people we are." [4:18]

Although this behaviour in many instances contributes to the parents forming a fiercely resistant attitude with repeated exposures, it is immediately very provocative and stressful. Parents have described feeling very intimidated by this behaviour on the initial visits, but later, and also reinforced by sharing experiences with other parents, come to take this as normal procedure which in the confrontation stage (described above) does

not visibly faze the parent. However, it does become a source of shock and stress in the post-confrontation stage, when reflection on the experience is taking place. In this process, parents marvel at the rude behaviour of the police, and contextualize it in terms of the discrimination and racial oppression taking place in apartheid society.

"In my point of view, the South African Police were never people, you know, to protect us, because the laws of the country, that they made, are there to safeguard their interests, and never mind us, you know. That's why they can treat us like that, because every coloured person, whether you are innocent, whether you are a Christian or what, you know, it's all against us. It doesn't give us a chance. I mean, you cannot even speak, then you go to prison". [4:19]

3) Reasons for Visit: When they arrive at a house on a visit, the police are normally looking for a child and activist in the family. However, in what appears to be another feature of the state's campaign of criminalizing political action, the reasons for them being sought are often given by the policemen as the perpetration of criminal offences such as public violence, arson, or other similar offences.

"Then in October, they came to the house. They came at 5 in the morning, a Tuesday morning, and there must have been at least 12 policemen in the house. They surrounded the whole block; they were in the front, and they were in the back, and they had guns open in their hands. Even the policemen in the house had long shotguns, they looked through everything and turned the whole house upside down. They were very rude, and they asked for "X". We said we didn't know anyone with that name and we told them the name of our son. Then they said that they were looking for him and that they were going to charge him on 23 counts of arson and attempted murder." [4:20]

"They said they were looking for (my son), and they said he was dangerous. I said that I thought they were referring to things like murder, rape or armed robbery,

and if (my son) had done something like that, I was entitled to know. I said: "Tell me, is my child a strangler?" They didn't answer but they kept telling me that they were going to shoot my son. "If we see his hair sticking up over the wall, we'll shoot the hair off his head. If we see his face, we'll shoot him dead." [4:21]

Not only do the police appear to be trying to aggravate parents and promote disloyalty in the family by giving parents false or exaggerated accounts of what the children are being sought for. In several cases parents have reported that they have also given conflicting information when the children have been sought after at different addresses (for example, at parents, grandparents, uncles, etc.). In these instances, different reasons are given at different addresses (for example, at parents', the reason given is arson; at grandparents', the reason given is public violence; at uncle's, the reason given is housebreaking, etc.), creating the impression that the child is in fact a dangerous criminal, and has a multitude of criminal charges against him/her. This also serves to discredit the liberation struggle itself, as parents and relatives may come to the conclusion that these are the values to which it aspires and the kinds of activities "the comrades" engage in. Further, the police appear to be trying to intimidate parents into giving information, and inform on their child by threatening to keep him or her in prison for a very long time or even killing him/her.

"(The policemen) told me that my son had given a statement so 'you must come clean and tell me everything. then your son can come out. Otherwise I'll let him sit there for years he won't come out again'." [4:22]

"They keep telling me that they are going to shoot him. I went for counselling the last time they were coming here to look for him last year, they were

here three times. I was braver this time, but more cut up afterwards than the last time."

"Why is that?"

"I know what they did to Ashley Kriel; it's that death threat hanging over him." [4:23]

These strategies naturally serve to aggravate parents, and appear to be designed to sow ruptures and mistrust between the family members. Parents who are not yet politicized, or who might be new to their childrens' political involvement, may be prone to believe the policemen, who seem to know more about their childrens' involvement and activities than they themselves, and who may be perceived as having no apparent reason to lie about the charges against them. Certainly, at the very least, these parents have such respect for the authority of the police that it is only with difficulty that they will reject the policemen's version of the children's activities.

On the other hand, if the parents have become involved themselves, and hardened in their own political attitudes and outlook, they will not accept the policemen's allegations regarding their childrens' activities at face value; rather, they will remain convinced that these are deliberate attempts at disinformation and conflict in the family, and will dismiss them as such.

"The second time they came, they said they would shoot him dead because he was a "terrorist", and that really worked on my nerves. I hated them for what they said; liars is what they are. They just burst in the house, say what they want, do what they want it is as if we belong to them also." [4:24]

### Living On the Run

This section deals with the parents' experience of an

increasingly common situation in "coloured" Cape Flats townships. In the 1980's, politicization and militancy has increased dramatically in "coloured" townships, even in "coloured" middle-class communities. After a brief emergence of widespread political participation in the early 1980's, the militancy again came to the fore in 1985. It became apparent that extra-parliamentary political organizations such as the UDF enjoyed a wide support in the "coloured" townships, to an extent which not even the SAP had anticipated. Up until that point, the UDF had mainly a national and regional profile, with which the SAP attempted to deal through detention and harassment of its leaders on these levels. The 1985/86 rebellion gave clear evidence of the extent of organization the UDF and its affiliated bodies had succeeded in on a local level, as well as the extent of grassroots support they enjoyed.

Another significant indicator of the growing militancy in the "coloured" community has been the sharp increase in the number of "coloureds" accused in treason trials over the past few years. Although the early part of this century saw lively "coloured" participation in extra-parliamentary organizations such as the APO, the post-48 era has seen very little by way of "coloured" political participation. Rather, it has been a period during which "coloureds" have been systematically disenfranchised and stripped of their political rights. Pinnock (1982) has also in detail described other reasons for this decline in political activity, namely working conditions and the systematic removals which destroyed family and social networks built up over



generations. (See also Chapter 5)

The babyboom generation, procreated during this period and which reached maturity in the 1980's, appears to have restored these networks to some extent, and on that foundation forged the militant unity of recent years. Thus, a number of ANC cells involving "coloureds" came to light in the Western Cape, and several treason trials with exclusively "coloured" accused began. This previously unheard of phenomenon also signalled that the uprisings of 1985/86 was not just an outburst of mass discontent, but had a deeper grounding in aware and determined political militancy.

While it was not immediately possible for the state to quell this show of support and militancy due to the intensity of the riots during the latter half of 1985, the crackdown came during 1986, and continued during 1987, with massive detention swoops and curbs on extra-parliamentary, "affected", organizations. Thus, the repressive spotlight turned on the local political organizations, student/youth organizations, and their leadership, which had the consequence of sending virtually a whole generation of politically aware township youth "on the run". This meant that, for fear of political detention without trial, or arrest, these activists began sleeping away from home as it quickly became known that the police would come on their detention raids late at night or during the early hours of the morning.

For the parents, this has been an extremely trying situation, and it is one which is the source of tremendous worry and concern for

them. Part of the reason for the stressfulness of having a child "on the run", even more so than the experience of having a child in detention, is that there is virtually no contact between parents and their children in this situation. Often for weeks or months on end, they have no communication at all from their children, and thus have no knowledge of their whereabouts or activities. It is in fact even possible that their children might have already been detained for some time (since the SAP's procedure of confirming Emergency and Security detainees is very slow and unreliable in the eyes of the parents).

During 1987, an event seemed to exacerbate the way in which parents perceived the risks facing the children who were 'on the run'. Prior to ANC-member Ashley Kriel's death on July 9, parents were well aware of the possibility of assault and maltreatment facing their children if apprehended, as their conception was that the police were prepared to use harsh methods in order to intimidate activists, and to set examples to deter further involvement and activities. The killing of Kriel by undercover security policemen came as a shock to all parents of activists involved in student/youth organizations; they were not quite prepared for this degree of violence perpetrated against someone they considered to be worthy of respect and admiration for his work, who certainly was not seen as a criminal, and whom they still saw as a child. To the parents, the severity of this action signalled a change of strategy on the part of the police towards the young generation of politically aware and active youth that had come to maturity in the 1985/86 uprisings, and now their

expectations of police actions changed. To have a child 'on the run' at this time was extremely worrisky for the parents, who were now fearing the worst if the children were to be apprehended. It even went so far as to the activists themselves, even though they were 'on the run' and could not sleep at home, not wanting to leave their home community, and even making a point of being seen around the area, so that they would not be suspected of having gone away or abroad for military training, in which case they feared they would be dealt with in a similar manner.

This event thus triggered a period of tremendous fear in the progressive community, both for the parents and for the activists themselves. For the children, what started out as something "cool" and "progressive" and therefore good, had suddenly become something which was (literally) dead serious. We now want to look more closely at the meaning of this whole experience for the parents, as well as details of some of the most stressful aspects of the experience of having one's child 'on the run' for political reasons.

#### Living 'On the Run': Particularly Stressful Aspects

As mentioned above, the experience of having one's child 'on the run' is the most persistently stressful situation the parents in the townships live with. This is so for a number of reasons, some of which have been mentioned already: no contact or communication with the child for long periods; the possibility of harsh treatment on apprehension; the possibility of termination on

apprehension; and the possibility that the child has already been detained without the parents knowledge. One mother told me:

"The worst part about my son being involved was that he couldn't sleep at home and sometimes had nowhere to sleep. He didn't have a safe place to go. It has made him so frustrated, and it has been stressful for me. To him it is as if nobody cares, there is nobody prepared to help." [4:25]

We will now discuss a number of particularly stressful aspects of having one's child 'on the run' which parents have experienced; disruption of family life, the child coming home on an unexpected visit, and the uncertainty that parents experience because of the lack of communication and contact with the child.

Disruption: Parents first come to fear, then later to accept, that their family will not for a long time, and possibly never, be the same. They won't be able to have peace in the house and they won't be able to have "normal" family gatherings or activities again. Parents (especially mothers) feel strongly that they will also not be able to "have" their children anymore, in the sense of the mother 'possessing' her child, and the parent-child relationship is drastically altered. In short, it will change the entire balance of the family, and if the parents don't realize this immediately, a close call or a child's narrow escape (being in the house when the police arrive to detain him/her) will quickly drive the point home:

The security police came looking for X at his parents house one night when he had unexpectedly come home and was sleeping over; still sleeping, he was hidden in a box while the police searched the house. "I knew that I could never have my son staying in the house anymore after that even if I wanted to. I am afraid that I will never have him again in my whole life." [4:26]

"It was very hard for me to think that this child didn't really have a home anymore, that he was being chased like an animal, and that it was my own child on top of it all." [4:27]

Although it was sometimes tempting for a mother with a strong nurturing need, not having seen the child for weeks or maybe months, to keep him or her in the house for the night, it was not possible because of the high risk of a police visit during the night.

"One night some time after the police searched the house and we hid (my son) in the box, he had to sleep on the roof of the church. He came in quite late, he had nowhere to sleep and was very tired of running. I said to him "you can sleep here" but he answered "no, mommy has forgotten about the night when they came already". I said "no you must just believe that they are not going to come" but he said "no mommy, you can't trust them." [4:28]

Other parents, having come to a fuller acceptance of the fact, and a fuller appreciation of the possible costs of sleeping at home, are on the contrary relieved that the child no longer wants to take the risk of sleeping at home. The stress on the parents is simply too great, something which they have come to appreciate from previous experiences. This is particularly the case with parents whose children are older and have been politically active for several years already.

"He came in past 10 and we were in bed already. I asked him "are you coming to sleep here" and he said "no mommy". I said "thank God you are not coming to sleep here - I would be worried the whole night and not be able to sleep". [4:29]

Coming Home: The vast majority of the parents interviewed have experienced the occasion when the child 'on the run' comes home for food or a change of clothes, or just a visit to the parents,

to be the most stressful of all. At that time, the fear of the police arriving to take the child away is at its peak, and the parents are of course unable to remain unaffected by it. Not only do they take security precautions to prevent being surprised by the police while the child is in the house, but they become so taken up by these that it severely limits the contact during the brief homecoming, which further exacerbates the parents' stress- and frustration levels.

"He would come home sometimes, I never knew when, for a decent meal or for some clean clothes or whatever. Then I was really on my nerves because I was so worried that the police would come while he was here. I would be standing at the window looking for the police vans. I was looking out on all sides because you can't be sure where they are coming from." [4:30]

Thus, not knowing when the child is coming home, yet knowing that it could be anytime, the parent is always in a state of anticipating the homecoming. But this situation is paradoxical, because while the anticipation entails having things ready - clothes washed and ironed, food on the stove or ready to be heated quickly, and a supply of food to take with - the parent is actually not able to spend time with the child, when the visit does occur, because she is under so much stress from fearing a police visit. The anticlimax of the visit is therefore evident, and it is in the act of preparing that the mother has to invest her nurturing and love, and thus have the contact with the child through the articles which s/he is going to consume; eat, drink, wear and so on. Often the tension experienced by the mother during the visit becomes very taxing for her, even to the extent of having mixed feelings about the visit itself.

"As I gave him the plate of food, I felt that I wanted to take the plate and shove the food down his throat so that he must get finished and get out - in fear, that's all out of fear. It is not nice to always be scared that the cops are going to come around to take your child away." [4:31]

Sometimes this fear is even so intense so as to make the parents almost regret the child's involvement in the struggle.

"I was always heartsore when he left, and I always asked him when he was coming back home. I felt so sad and sometimes I thought to myself 'if only he wasn't involved in the struggle'. Even if he was a thief I would have had more of a hold over him because they wouldn't have been hunting him like now because of the political situation." [4:32]

Hence the feeling is that political activists are persecuted more severely than "common" criminals. The state's actions are more severe towards individuals involved in resistant political activities than towards those who engage in "normal" illegal activities.

#### Detentions

South Africa has some of the harshest security laws in the world. Present-day South African security legislation is a highly complex web of human rights defying regulations, enacted in the interests of 'national security' and the 'public order, which have been accumulated since the 1950's or in fact since the National Party came to power in 1948. Believing that it is subject of a 'total onslaught' by communist-inspired insurgents, foreign and domestic, the South African state has seen it necessary to formulate a 'total strategy' to counteract this threat, which gradually has been implemented since the bloodless coup following

the 'Muldergate scandal' in 1974. The 'total strategy' has entailed the tightening of restrictions on the political opposition, the drastically increased expenditures on the police and the military, which amounted to over 21% of the total estimated expenditures for 1988/89 (SAIRR 1988), and the extensive use of detention without trial of individuals considered to be a threat to state security.

Thus, detention without trial is at the core of the state's repressive machinery (Foster 1987), and as such, it has been the main tool of fighting the political opposition and progressive organizations in the 1980's. By removing virtually the entire leadership of extra-parliamentary political organizations, they have been rendered effectively paralysed, and the state has thus been able to curb their activities severely without having to declare them unlawful. During the 1986 State of Emergency alone, some 20 000 people were subjected to detention without trial in its various forms (Kruss 1987a p.4), and the total to date, since the imposition of the first State of Emergency in 1985, exceeds 35 000 individuals (Weekly Mail 2/12/88).

However, it is possible to speculate that precisely the praxis of detention without trial has been one of the central causes of the rapidly spreading mass resistance to the state, and indirectly serving to increase both the width and the depth of the politicization of the masses and therefore the mobilization of the progressive organizations. From the point of view of the state, this must be seen as an unforeseen and undesirable effect.



In practice, detention without trial appears to have helped spread mobilization and organization on progressively more grassroots levels, as repression generally necessitated decentralization, and the detention of leaders and activists on national and regional levels necessitated the broadening and increased democratization of structures. Hence the springing up of localized branches of national organizations going as far as the by now widespread network of area and street committees, peoples' courts, etc., and the intensified efforts at recruitment, education and training to ensure the continued functioning of the structures in case of the detention of officeholders and organizers. In addition, these organizations developed structures which were flexible enough to be able to cope with this repressive situation.

Being at the heart of the state's repressive arsenal, detention without trial is thus the "raison d'être" of some of the conditions we have previously described, as well as of those which follow. The police would not be visiting activists' homes, activists would not have to go on the run, parents would not fear informers or police visits were it not for the fact that they feared the possibility of detention without trial of their children, and the kinds of conditions and treatments that are expected during the process. (For a full explication of the kinds of methods of torture in detention used in South Africa, see Foster 1987)

"My son is on the run because he is frightened, not because he is guilty of something. He is only a young child, and doesn't know what's in store for him; maybe you will torture him or what not", a mother told the

security police during one of their attempts to detain her son. [4:33]

#### Detentions: Particularly Stressful Aspects

Although parents have reported experiencing the situation of having one's child 'on the run' as the most stressful, there are several aspects of being the parent of a detainee that are experienced as very stressful. Generally, however, parents have reported feeling more at ease, compared to when the child was 'on the run', when their child's detention has been confirmed, provided that it is a "normal" State of Emergency detention. The parents now know where their child is, that s/he is sleeping indoors, that s/he is getting fed regularly (though mothers normally don't have much praise for the prison diet), and they know that they will be able to visit the child every two weeks. We will now consider some of the perceived stressful aspects of being the parent of a detainee.

Disruption: As in the situation of having one's child 'on the run', to have a child in detention is also, and as disruptive of "normal" family life in very similar ways. It is no longer possible to have family gatherings or functions as before; the family may have become divided because of the detention or at the very least, the missing person always casts a shadow over the occasion as the parents make efforts to maintain his or her presence symbolically. Moreover, the feeling that the parents have now definitely lost their hold over the child is prominent since the child is now imprisoned. S/he will therefore have received what the parents believe to be a permanent mark by the

security police from which they can never be free, except perhaps after years of non-involvement.

"Once they know about him, if (the "comrades") have done something, that's the first one to get blamed again." [4:34]

Stigma: When the child is detained, s/he is no longer innocently 'on the run' but has now been caught by the police and is imprisoned either in terms of the Emergency regulations or the Internal Security Act. Additionally, the detainee has often been identified as belonging to a political body, or has been claimed by such a body, and by virtue of having been detained has publicly been identified as a possible threat to state security. For the parent, therefore, there is a strong sense of stigma attached to the official confirmation of their detained child, which is particularly stressful if the parents are not politicized at all at the time. It is often especially prominent in the workplace, where colleagues and superiors are often perceived as looking down on the parent because of his or her child's involvement, but also in the neighbourhood as the parent's friends, acquaintances, and neighbours are usually not initially part of the progressive network which offers sympathy and support. Thus, the parent's "normal" associations and even extended family can take offence at the development of his or her child's detention.

Interrogation: While in detention, the interrogation of their children is what the parents fear most. By word of mouth from other parents or activists, the parents are aware that the police are in pursuit of information which is obtained through rigorous

interrogation of the children, during which methods of torture are often used. Parents are also aware that if the children are being held at certain police stations, the chances of them being heavily interrogated are greater than at others, or if they are suddenly transferred from prison to certain police stations, this almost certainly means that they are going to be interrogated there. During these periods, parents are extremely worried, constantly thinking about their children, and have difficulties sleeping and/or concentrating on routine activities during the day.

Treatment: Parents of detainees also experience the treatment they are given by the police as aggravating an already very stressful situation. The police are perceived as deliberately attempting to intensify their suffering in the situation as a way of further harrassing and punishing the family in which open political dissent has been diagnosed. This is seen as being the case both in dealing with individual policemen as well as the workings of the entire police machinery in general. This treatment extends from rude manners in personal dealings, deliberate attempts at making telephone- and personal inquiries difficult, to complicated and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures when applying for permits to visit, etc. Parents believe that they are subject to discriminatory treatment on the whole, in that official policy is often contradicted by individual actions of policemen with no reason given, and detainees are transferred without prior notice in order to make an imminent visit impossible.

### Fear of Informers

An important part of the political policing methods of the SAP has been the reliance on informers to provide information regarding the activities and members of various organizations which see themselves as part of the national democratic struggle in South Africa. This is done both by planting policemen, or previously uninvolved persons who have been recruited specifically for the purpose of infiltrating a certain organization, in that structure, as well as by recruiting members of the organization during detention or imprisonment through intimidation and/or promises of material rewards. All activists involved in organizations are therefore well aware and constantly operating with the knowledge that someone in the vicinity of his or her dealings is supplying information to the SAP. This knowledge has also sifted through to the parents, initially through consciousness raising by their children, who found it necessary to instill a security consciousness in their parents for the sake of their own security, and later from the parents' own observations and experiences.

Living in insecurity: Parents of political activists who became involved in 1985/86 were, if not already involved, initially very isolated. At that time, both the formal and informal progressive support networks were small and only just beginning to respond to the radically increased need; if the parents were not intrinsically motivated to seek contact with the network, therefore, they had few opportunities to meet other people who

could be trusted to confide in when now suddenly the need to discuss politically related matters arose. They unexpectedly found themselves in a situation where they had to absorb the repercussions of their childrens' active political involvement alone, although the nature of their experiences were such that they felt a strong need to talk about and share them with others. However, because it was suddenly a problem to find trustworthy confidantes, this was rarely possible.

Another reason for this was the fact that the parents had been uprooted from the communities of their birth through the Group Areas removals of the 1960's and 1970's and had virtually been "thrown together" in the new area. Thus, the natural support network of extended family and neighbours was destroyed. In the new area, this was never rebuilt, at least never to that extent. Consequently, even if the neighbours had been known for years in that capacity, the same trust, intimacy, and sharing of life experiences were never developed. The parents were therefore extremely hesitant to approach these neighbours and confide in them their recent experiences; they complained that they did not know them intimately enough to have a reliable conception of where they stood with respect to the struggle and their childrens' involvement.

The parents were thus constantly suspicious of others, and were constantly worried about being informed on by others, a state of affairs which made contact and organization within the community increasingly difficult. A heightened awareness of the risks of

openly displaying the family's political connections developed, and the parents began to involve themselves in their childrens' as well as their own safety. If a group of "comrades" was visiting their child, for example, or if they were having a meeting in the house, parents became concerned that precautions were taken when they left (one-by-one, or in small groups) so that they wouldn't raise unnecessary suspicion, leading to being informed on by a neighbour or a passer-by.

"You don't know who you can talk to, or whether the neighbour might be a paid police informer." [4:35]

This insecurity enhanced the function of fear as a deterrent to political involvement, and to the building of resistance networks in the community. (This fear also extended to the researcher as several interviewees expressed concern that they might be "speaking against their own people", or that someone like myself might exploit the parents' need and desire to talk about their experiences and use it against them.)

Thus the parents have developed a certain awareness of the need to be "security conscious". For example, many parents have arrived at a point of accepting the necessity for their children not to divulge to them information of where they are sleeping or staying at the moment; in case the parents are interrogated by the police, it eliminates the possibility of the involuntary admission of this piece of information. The parents have also become careful and suspicious when speaking over the telephone:

"this phone is tapped - people don't even call me by my real name on the phone anymore." [4:36]

Some parents have even explicitly told members of extended family not to mention or speak about the children over the telephone.

An extreme example was a father interviewee who developed an acute paranoid schizophrenic psychosis, believing that the entire neighbourhood had bonded together in keeping him under surveillance. He thought the main reasons for this was that both of his eldest children were centrally involved in local political organizations, and the fact that all the major activist figures in the community had been coming to and sleeping over at his house at one time or another when they were 'on the run'. He believed that a whole string of people, from the fruitseller on the corner to the neighbours immediately surrounding his house were always watching him, through drawn curtains and even through the peephole in the door, and became obsessed with watching and counter-acting their strategies for watching him. He was eventually hospitalized and had subsequent outpatient treatment.

Visits: A frequent occurrence and a high stress point for many parents has been the phenomenon that only a few minutes after their child, who is 'on the run', has left the house, the police arrive in pursuit of him or her. This is in most cases within one hour of the children entering the house; they mainly come home for a quick wash and change of clothes, as well as a taste of mom's food, which takes in the region of 30-40 minutes. The police then arrive at the house only a few minutes after the child leaves. Parents interpret this as proof that their house is under surveillance, and that the arrival of the wanted child is



reported directly to the police who arrive at the scene as quickly as possible.

"I think they knew that my son was here - it was as if someone phoned them to say he was here". [4:37]

"He wasn't even five minutes out of the house when they came..." [4:38]

The parents feel that further proof of this is the fact that they themselves do not know when the child is coming home. Although they know that the child could come home at any time, it is often totally unexpected, and yet the police are on the scene very quickly. The parents feel this could not have occurred, had it not been for the direct relaying to the police of the information that the wanted child is at home. It is frequently the case that the activists themselves had not planned on coming home, which would rule out the possibility of a leak in their immediate environment, but may unexpectedly have received busfare, or suddenly found themselves without shelter for the night, and so decided to take the risk of coming home.

We have in this chapter surveyed some of the major perceived stressors which confronted parents of political activists during the turmoil and unrest in the "coloured" townships in the Western Cape since the eruption of the 1985/86 rebellion. The daily presence and intervention of the police in these areas drastically raised the experienced level of fear and stress for the residents, and traumatically penetrated their day-to-day existence. These stressors furthermore has had an effect on the parents political consciousness, which we will now turn to describe.

## CHAPTER 5

### PROCESS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

This chapter aims at elucidating the process whereby the parents of "coloured" political activists, from a position of not being "interested" in politics, have come to see themselves as being involved in the national democratic struggle in South Africa, and to be wholeheartedly supportive of their children in their activities.

We will begin by sketching a brief background of some historical factors which have had a bearing on the general attitudes they embraced prior to becoming aware that their children were involved. This involvement brought the parents into direct contact with the political issues of the day in 1985/86 - issues which previously, in many cases, they had actively been avoiding. It is by no means meant to be a history of "coloured" development, nor an in-depth analysis of their political situation; rather we are intent on distilling certain basic attitudes which can be drawn from their general socio-political situation as a backdrop to the development that we will describe in the following sections.

#### Background

Historically, the population group in South Africa denominated "coloured" has developed in a contradictory and concealed 'niche' in national politics. The major issue has always been black-white relations; that is, the whites have been primarily concerned with controlling the black African population, which outnumbers

them 7:1. The issue of the "coloured" people has been of secondary importance, and one which has posed a problem for the white government in terms of the extent to which they should be allowed to share the benefits of 'civilized' life in South Africa. Seen by the whites as a benevolent political group, whose allegiance to them could be taken for granted, it has not, until recently, been considered a pressing issue.

In the following, we are not writing from a general understanding of a particular "coloured" 'identity'; the term "coloured" in fact refers to a very heterogeneous group of people in South African society, and any reference to a group identity must be seen as a perpetration of the myth that the apartheid regime, and its collaborators attempt to reinforce in legitimising the policy of separate development. A further indication of this is the fact that the definition of "coloured" in the Population Registration Act of 1950 is a negative one: those not classified as "whites", "Asian" or "Bantu".

Several authors, some of whom are classified as "coloureds", claim that "coloureds" themselves acutely perceive their own situation to be squeezed between two major blocks. On the one hand, there are the Africans with their large numbers and distinct culture, with whom "coloureds" have been explicitly instructed not to mate (Whisson 1971). On the other hand, there are the whites who have wielded power and made concessions for "coloureds" in order to safeguard marginally better conditions and economic opportunities for them and thus to ensure their continued loyalty, while at the same time shunning intimate

contact them. "Coloureds" have nevertheless seen themselves, (since a significant part of their heritage stems from whites) as inextricably mixed up with whites, and have traditionally used European languages and aspired to European values (Marais 1957).

Adam Small (1970) has described the position of "coloureds" as being "between two stools" (p. 2), but this also has a second, more subtle, significance: it also refers to the question for "coloureds" of whether or not to collaborate with the whites. On the one hand, it is argued that "coloureds" have been kept inferior by the whites, and thus, in order to make their demands felt and achieve equality, "coloureds" should refrain from participating in the unequal structures created for them by the whites. On the other hand, some maintain that participating in these structures is the only way to attain "material benefits" which would otherwise not be available to "coloured" people. Small refers to this dilemma as the "political schizophrenia" (ibid. p.7) of "coloureds. Although this term is obviously used in a figurative sense, it nevertheless gives us an indication of the traumatic nature of the political situation for "coloureds", and the fact that it is important in understanding "coloured" attitudes.

To quite a large extent, then, the foundation of present day "coloured" attitudes can be related to the political treatment of "coloured" people in South Africa in the 20th century. This has been of a contradictory nature, particularly in the Cape Province. Since the introduction of Cape Ordinance 50 of 1828,

"coloured" people in particular were gradually freed from legislative discrimination, and came to enjoy a limited franchise until the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. While a social colour bar still existed, a vigorous political activity began to emerge among "coloureds", chiefly through the African People's Organization (APO), in the early part of the century. The situation had improved, but there were still several important steps left before equality with whites could be achieved; "coloured" leaders seem to have thought that this was imminent, and that only sustained and persistent efforts would secure its realization.

"Until the 1920's and even the '30's, however, there was a mood of great optimism and hope amongst the Coloured people. Their leaders had all had their minds on one objective, namely, that they were to join in the mainstream of the South African people, sharing in the benefits of South African development." (Van der Ross 1979 p. 74).

From then onwards, the mood gradually changed to one of pessimism, disbelief, and resentment. It became increasingly clear, through new policies in the United party in the early 1940's, and then through the rigorous implementation of apartheid by the National party from 1948, that the whites had no intention of allowing "coloureds" equal rights, privileges, or opportunities. They were systematically stripped of their political rights, which culminated in their removal from the common voter's roll (1956), the prohibition of belonging to 'white' political parties (1968), and finally, their elimination from municipal politics (1971).

The removal from the common voter's roll in 1956 appears

particularly to have etched itself into "coloured" peoples memory as the crucial point in the turn-about, after which there remained no doubt about the government's intentions. However, only the accumulation of later events have mobilized "coloureds" from a position of disbelievingly resigning themselves to this betrayal, to militant action. A father interviewee told me :

"Anyway, the "Boere" they call themselves, sent their people around to us that we must vote for them, they will do everything nice for us, and everything ... you know. Alright, so we voted for them, our people, I'm talking about my father, voted for them. And what did they do the moment they got in? They took everybody's, that isn't white, their votes away. In other words, they had that plan laid before they approached us, knowing that once they are in power, that only the white man can rule. I mean ... how can it be? This is our country ... it's our country but we have got no rights in our own country. This is what makes the world upside-down. I mean, everywhere you see people fighting against the government. Why? Because they voted for that government, but now the government isn't carrying out the promises that they made to the people, you see. Since that time, till now, they have ruled us with an iron hand.' You know what I mean, I'm cursing my father for voting them into power, it's true." [5:1]

The fact that a strong sense of having been betrayed by whites exists among "coloureds" appears indisputable; this is something which Marais (1957) foresaw more than thirty years ago. "Coloured" people have had no option but to accept their political powerlessness, the source of much anger and frustration, and one way of dealing with it has been to simply attempt to get as much out of the system for oneself as one possibly could. For instance, when the Group Areas removals necessitated a concern for oneself and one's immediate family (the extended family and neighbourhood networks having been destroyed in this process), one could see cooperation within the

system as the only way of getting as much as possible from the white man. While not necessarily agreeing with the white-ruled apartheid system, "coloured" people found themselves nevertheless supporting it, and at times even collaborating within it, in order to maximize their own material benefits.

Thus, up to 1985, the route that was chosen was the collaborationist one, but only because there really was no other realistic alternative. Only in 1985 and thereafter did a non-collaborationist and resistant stance emerge among "coloureds" on a broad scale, since the levels of dissatisfaction, militancy, and organization were sufficiently high for it to do so. But earlier, when "coloured" politics was allowed to re-emerge in the mid-1960's, leading up to the elections of the Coloured Peoples Representative Council (C.P.R.C.) in 1969, it was on condition of co-operation within the state's framework of 'separate development' (Whisson 1971).

This policy had already begun to be felt, particularly within the sphere of education and housing. The schooling of "coloured" children had become increasingly segregated during the first three decades of the century, as the importance of mission schools was decreased and the provincial councils took over the administration of the public school system. In 1930, a special department was created in the Cape Province's Department of Education for "coloured" schools, and in 1964 it was designated the responsibility of a Division of Education in the Department of Coloured Affairs. These measures facilitated the

administration of "coloured" schooling according to the 'grand apartheid' plans of the National Party, and the relative under-spending on Black education generally.

"The concern with Black education which the National Party brought to the government was part of a broader strategic concern with securing White supremacy. In its barest essentials, the Nationalists strategy in relation to Black South Africans involved, on the one hand, their social segregation, denial of any access to state power, and their absolute exclusion from the mainstream of the political process as conducted in the context of common statehood, and on the other, their increasingly tight integration into the common capitalist economy, mainly as cheap labour. it was a strategy directed at locking the country's subordinated classes into a position of inferiority through their regimentation and fragmentation, physically as well as by means of fostering Colouredism and all forms of tribalism." (Molteno 1987 p.12)

Nevertheless, despite the grossly unequal conditions which prevailed in "coloured" compared to white schools, the lack of facilities and resources, as well as being educated for inferiority, "coloured" people have maintained attitudes regarding education which have survived well into the 1980's. In a situation where there is virtually no way out, where every avenue to political power is closed off, and where there are other population groups who are even worse off, thereby reducing the hopelessness of one's own situation, education was seen as the source of hope and improvement for the "coloureds". While the riots in 1976 and the schools' boycott in 1980 were instrumental in changing some parents' attitudes to the issue of education, for the large majority of "coloured" parents it remained the gate through which their children would be able to escape a life as a member of the working class, a life like their own (Westcott



1988).

"I was about 15 years old when I left school and started working. So I didn't really get a full education and we're not a rich family; whatever you see here is what we have and what I have to give to my children. I felt that all I could really give them was an education, and if they start bugging about with their education, what have they got?"[5:2]

"My whole family feels that he didn't have to go so far, and especially to throw away his education. They would say that his mother sacrificed so much for him and he threw it all away because of the political situation. They are like that, though, they will never give up their education for a political cause; they are sitting on the fence so to speak."[5:3]

"I only went as far as std.8, but I wanted them to get a full education so that they would have a better future for their lives. I thought maybe they can become schoolteachers or doctors and make a good life for themselves. That was the most important thing. As long as I have enough food for myself and my children, and enough to clothe all of us, I don't worry; after that the most important thing was their education. But now I can see the injustice that has been done; what the people are fighting for now." [5:4]

With wealth and education as two main status symbols in their eyes (Van der Ross 1979) "coloureds" were not prepared to sacrifice the opportunity of some education in order to uphold principles of non-collaboration with the regime by non-participation in the segregated schools system; instead, simply calling for the improvement of the education system had to suffice, in the hope that this would come in time. As it turned out, however, it was non-collaboration and boycotts which succeeded in effecting large scale upgradings of the "coloured" education system (i.e. 1980). These events were the forerunners of the 1985/86 rebellion in the Western Cape, which as we have seen, largely revolved around students' demands albeit

contextualized into unprecedentedly general political demands, when different and more militant attitudes to the educational system, and apartheid in general, permeated the "coloured" population group to a much greater extent.

From the 1960's "coloureds" were also subjected to extensive Group Areas removals, whereby thousands of people were uprooted from inner-city areas and suburbs and relocated in sub-economic housing schemes, or townships, on the Cape Flats. Entire community networks were uprooted from their homes in neighborhoods all over Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula, and scattered in these barren and impersonal concrete-ghettoes, thereby breaking bonds and relationships built up over generations. But while the South African Institute of Race Relations observed in 1978 that "No single government measure has created greater coloured resentment, sacrifice, and sense of injustice" (SAIRR 1978 p.111), the "coloured" community was in far too great a state of disorganization and distress to oppose the removals in any effective way. It was rather a matter of survival which forced "coloureds", in the face of the absence of organized opposition tactics, worsened financial circumstances, adverse and isolated living conditions in the new home, and as a means of avoiding experiencing the pain of their enforced dispossession, simply to keep on working, and try to provide as well as possible for their own nuclear family, in the hope that this would lead to an improved material situation. With these dynamics in mind, Pinnock (1982) observed :

"By the end of the 1960's the (coloured) working class

in Cape Town were like a routed, scattered army, dotted in confusion about the land of their birth. The division of labour was extreme, and the high priests of the new regime held the monopoly on knowledge and skills...

Even the drabest industrial town has educational possibilities the suburb lacks. In the lonely crowd of the satellite clusters, with no control over communication networks, life tended to be reduced to what came through official channels and the ghetto grapevine. And with rising rates of violence in these areas, the township became an increasingly difficult place to meet people after work - favouring silent conformity and not rebellion." (Pinncock 1982, p.166)

The Group Areas removals thus served, at least for a time, to make organization and unity within the "coloured" population group even more difficult, to discourage any attempt at interfering in the political process, and to remind "coloureds", in a powerful way, of white supremacy and power. This was the background to the situation of the parents prior to their childrens' involvement in extra-parliamentary political activities in the 1980's.

#### Parental Attitudes and Outlook, Pre-1985

Prior to 1985, then, most parents of "coloured" political activists were "not interested in politics"[5:5]. At that time only a handful of activists were working in progressive political organizations, which maintained a low profile, and had a small, core membership. In one area, the then Civic Association, relatively active between 1981 and 1984, had only 3 or 4 leading activists centrally involved, but managed to mobilize between two- and three hundred residents to meetings which addressed mainly housing and amenities issues. According to one of the activists, militancy ran sporadically high in meetings and in the

community generally, but this was before the broadening of these issues into general political demands, at which time the power base declined. Similarly, the UDF area committee was the work of 5 committed activists in 1983 and 1984, when the organisation was still in its infancy. The local CAYCO branch was also in the process of being formed at that time, and did not yet have a large following or membership. Thus, a broad-based, general political awareness and program of action did not exist in the "coloured" community at that time, it only came in 1985 and thereafter.

Nevertheless, Soweto 1976 had a certain impact on the "coloured" Cape Flats communities. Although the parents interviewed in the present study didn't see it as a call to action for themselves, when police took violent action against protesters in the African township of Langa, they felt that

"it made one sit up and take notice - if it can happen to those people, it can happen to us. I've always said that we're all in the same boat". [5:6]

The protests also spread to "coloured" townships on the Cape Flats, to the point where Bonteheuwel and Elsie's River were the scenes of "some of the most violent confrontations between protesters and police" (Hitner & Jenkin 1976 p. 3). At that time, however, the parents themselves were in their late 20s to late 30s, had one or several children already, and were in the early stages of building a home and a family, and were therefore out of reach of the calls to get involved. At the same time, their children were too young to have been touched by these events as they were only 13-14 years old or younger in 1976. Thus, while

the events served as an awareness-raising experience for the parents, neither they nor their children could involve themselves in the events because of generational circumstances; it was essentially the generation which was between these parents and their children to which it appealed and which responded.

Attitude to the state: The parents all had one vivid memory of the state in common, the fact that they had been dispossessed and subjected to a forced removal from their home community. This was felt to be a very traumatic event as families were resettled in large, impersonal sub-economic housing schemes. While the shock of this event was experienced as virtually paralyzing, economic necessity and concern for one's children forced parents to carry on working and to support the family despite the upheaval. If anything, it reinforced the impression of one's helplessness in the face of the might of the state, for even though the thought of resisting crossed some of the parents' minds, political organisation was virtually non-existent in the coloured community at that time. Following the merciless crackdown on extra-parliamentary political organization in the early 1960's, after which both the ANC and the PAC were banned and had to operate from outside SA borders, the political opposition inside the country was in a state of paralysis from which it took more than a decade to recover. In addition, the country saw a phenomenal period of economic growth and expansion which pacified especially "coloureds", who were in a position to receive some of the benefits.

Thus, during a period of economic opportunity and advancement, of

extreme State coercion and control, and the non-existence of organized political resistance, "coloured" people had virtually no option but to concentrate on the physical and material well-being of the immediate family, carry on with daily life almost as if nothing had happened, and rather look to the future. It was also during this period that the generation of political activists that came to maturity in the 1980's was procreated.

Unwillingness to Risk: For many parents, it was unthinkable to risk destroying what one and one's family had by showing any political involvement against the state, particularly with a recent memory of dispossession. They were themselves of the opinion that "coloureds are essentially selfish - they are only thinking of themselves and their immediate family" [5:7]. It was felt that by involving oneself "in politics", one did not only risk losing life or limb, but on a broader social level one would be subject to harrassment and victimization. As the family's social and economic situation was perceived as fragile in the first place (because of being "non-white", earning relatively little, having large families to support, scarcity of other job opportunities) it was not sensible to risk losing one's present circumstances. Rather one preferred to "work hard to earn enough to live in decency"[5:8] and not take the risk of losing everything because of wanting to get involved to change the present political system, and this was especially so if one already saw oneself as "living better than the neighbour" [5:9]. To try to change the present political system was something which was perceived as futile, since the "coloured" people generally

were of the opinion that the Afrikaner would never relinquish control, and were also unable to visualize cooperation with the African community to take control (Lambley 1980, Aeschliman 1983).

On a practical level, furthermore, parents also feared the costs involved were the children to become embroiled in court cases because of extra-parliamentary political activity; legal fees, bail money, etc. The parents initially had little awareness of the existence of, and the resources available from, the progressive support network. Therefore, if the child insisted on political involvement, the parents emphasized to them that they disclaimed responsibility;

"I told him right from the start 'If you get involved, don't depend on your mother. If you get caught and end up in jail, I don't have money to bail you out or pay for a lawyer, and I won't come to court'." [5:10]

Discouraging Childrens' Involvement: With the eruption of violence and unrest in 1984, later spreading throughout the country in 1985, the parents became increasingly worried about the possible involvement of their own children. This was particularly the case in families with sons that were in their late teens already; parents of younger children never even dreamt that their children could get involved, particularly as deeply as they did.

"I never thought that my child could be involved in something like this." [5:11]

Initially, as most of the unrest was taking place outside of the

Western Cape, most parents seem to have thought that there was really no danger of their children becoming involved in political activities. However, simply the potential risk of them becoming "interested" in what was happening around the country made parents take certain precautions. They would deliberately refrain from discussing political events and issues in front of their children, they would attempt to prevent them from seeing any literature (newspapers, magazines) or TV programmes which discussed the political situation, and prevent any political indoctrination from taking place inside the home. These issues thus became laden with a sort of taboo, which had its origin in the parents' own experience; while they were growing up, it was unthinkable to openly criticize the state, and fruitless to engage in protest activities. It was therefore not a possible subject of discussion in the family, particularly if the children were present or within hearing distance.

In some families, however, where an open anti-state stance was taken early, meaning pre-1985, the political situation in the country was a frequent topic of discussion. In these families, it was seen as something necessary to take up and discuss, to inculcate in the children as part of their education regarding realities in the country, and as part of the education of friends and visitors to the house. These parents were committed to spreading an awareness of the national democratic struggle and to serve as examples that it was possible to openly criticize the state, and to stand up for one's beliefs. In these instances, parents have indeed been instrumental in being the catalysts in



their own children's active involvement in the struggle, although not without a certain ambivalence:

"To tell you the truth, I feel both happy and sad that it was probably my own active involvement which inspired (my son's) activities: if I had known the consequence it was going to have that I brought little X along when myself and Mrs X went with busloads of women from 'the area to the Civic Centre to protest against our rent contract, I think I would have thought twice about my involvement that time".[5:12]

This mother made this statement in early 1986, when her son, as one of the first of senior activists in the Western Cape, had gone on the run. This point of view, however, is characteristic of a small group of parents who were affected by 'the struggle' comparatively early, in the that one or more family members were directly affected by detention or active involvement in political activities or organisations during or after the Soweto revolt and related events. Predominantly, these parents were involved in the sporadic but militant outbreaks of protest centred around removals and living conditions in their new homes, the sub-economic housing schemes or townships on the Cape Flats.

The second wave of involvement concerned the relatively small number of students who became politicized through and remained involved after the schools' boycott of 1980-81. Some turned to full time activism, whereas some went to university (UWC), where their political views matured and their commitment to the struggle deepened. These were the activists who were involved in the local establishment of several linked structures, like CAYCO and the UDF, and through this process acquired a firm commitment to a new political system in South Africa. Their parents, having

early come to accept their children's serious involvement in political activities, did so because at the time no violent protests were taking place, and they were only targets of state repression because of an active involvement in legitimate extra-parliamentary political bodies. Thus, at the time, the parents were not worried that their children were engaging in violent or riotous activities, but they came to see the harrassment of their children as part of the state's deliberate strategy to continue their oppression of Blacks.

"All these things you have to do just because of the situation. I mean, why did they government allow something like the UDF to be formed when now they are having such a crack-down and are detaining all the people working for the organisation?" [5:13]

The third wave, to which most of the parents interviewed belong, were those whose children became involved in the 1985/86 rebellion, or in its aftermath, and since when their political awareness has gone through a drastic change. These were mainly the parents who tried not to discuss "politics" in front of their children for fear that they may become too interested, and thus get involved. The general level of violence was at its highest ever in South Africa, with over 2000 unrest incidents taking place between August and November 1985 (Hall 1986), and with an average monthly death toll exceeding 120 for the same period (Indicator S.A. 1/1987). The parents main worry was therefore that their children would be wounded, maimed, or killed in the violent and frequent confrontations between police and rioting youths taking place all over the greater Cape Town area. Fear and protectiveness thus motivated the withholding of information from

children at home, the censoring of newspapers and TV broadcasts, something which they normally would not have done.

Yet, as the schools were the fertile ground for politicization parents in retrospect felt that their efforts at home were futile:

"But what he did outside the house we couldn't influence. He got involved by himself because he was inquisitive and concerned. He was going to the centre and hanging out with the other children from school ... He was very alert and intelligent in his own way and could quickly suss out what was really going on at that time." [5:14]

### Confrontation

Build-up: The fact that the parents (particularly the mothers) felt that they could not prevent the children from becoming involved gave rise to tensions and friction in the household. As the mother quoted above found in retrospect, if the children wanted to get involved, there was nothing the parents could do to stop them. As the children began spending an increasing amount of time out of the house, coming home from school to immediately go out again, and then only coming home late, the parents' suspicions grew. The parents may also have heard by word of mouth that the child is sometimes seen at the center with the 'comrades'. Furthermore, due to the childrens' unwillingness to disclose where they went, simply saying "out", or to them occasionally bringing a group of friends home, only to sit in a closed room for hours, the parents knew that the children "were up to something" [5:15]. Thus, because the parents could sense that something was going on, that the children were involved in things that they didn't want them to know about (as initially the

parents of the third wave activists were generally seen as reactionary by the activists, to the point where it was no use explaining to them regarding their involvement because they would not understand anyway), parents became increasingly frustrated, resulting in tension and friction between the family members. Frequent arguments and squabbles at home took place over minor and petty issues, and mothers experienced themselves as being overprotective, nagging and bitching mainly because of worrying about what the children were doing, and the possibility that they might get hurt or "get into trouble".

"I think I was very overprotective because I was always moaning or complaining or nagging here at home. I was so frustrated, and of course I was worried because I knew he could get into trouble. The problem was communication, and at that time there was no opening to discuss it with him." [5:16]

Thus one of the main problems at this stage was communication, and the lack of it created friction in the family which further separated the individuals within it. Politics as a topic of discussion was still taboo within the family, and this was one of the main reasons for the communication breakdown. From the parents' point of view, they did not want to broach the subject because, firstly, of their fear that this may serve as an inroad to and stimulate the childrens' involvement, and secondly, they did not have a clear understanding of what was currently taking place (i.e. the 1985/86 rebellion), nor a sophisticated understanding of the political situation in general. Thirdly, the parents were afraid of what they might find out, i.e. that the children were in fact involved already.

From the children's point of view, the parents were seen as being

un-politicized and non-progressive, and therefore there was no point including them. They were also filled with an air of invincibility, and showed a conviction that the youth and the students would be able to accomplish the initial stage of the revolution themselves.

Thus, part of the problem of the communication gap between the parents and their children was the generational shift that was taking place in youth and students politics in 1985. Whereas the youths who got involved in what we have identified as the second wave (1980-81) were more theoretically minded and had more of a long term concept of the struggle, and were actively working towards including the parents in their mobilization efforts, the youths that emerged to take leadership in 1985 were less sympathetic to these ideas. And as it took some time before the general theoretical guidelines of the charterist organizations sifted through to the new local leadership, which basically operated on a school and street level, there was a period when this was not an accepted policy, making the new generation reject their parents as active partners and companions in the struggle. However, when the youth began to feel the repressive might of the state, and to realize the extent to which it affected the parents, which indirectly also affected themselves by hampering the parents' role in supporting them, the process of gradually encouraging the parents to become involved was speeded up.

Because of these dynamics, albeit in differing degrees depending on the level of involvement of the activists and the levels of

experience and awareness of the parents, the family of the political activists found itself in a stress-induced deadlock. An outside factor was necessary to break it. This factor was police repression, which in different ways precipitated the unavoidable parent - child confrontation.

Disclosure: The build-up of friction and tension in the family, which we have just described, leads to a confrontation in one way or another. It almost always takes place between the mother and the child, though in some instances it involves both the parents. In no situation that we have encountered has it taken place between the father and the child only, at least not prior to the mother - child confrontation.

This has to do with the commonly occurring situation that the father is initially very unsympathetic to the children's involvement in the struggle, and very resistant to any change in outlook towards it. The father is often not aware, as early as the mother, of what the children are doing. He is usually at work during the day and out of touch with their daily whereabouts and activities, as well as with the day-to-day political developments in the area. He is therefore less accessible to the children in terms of a disclosure. Furthermore, because of his view of himself as the provider in the family, he will not allow the children to make decisions which may jeopardize the family's situation, and scorns any attempt at displacing his authority of deciding for the family what is wrong and what is right.

The mother, on the other hand, is most often at home during the

day and is more in touch with the children and their activities. Without necessarily approving of their activities, she has already 'covered' for the children on several occasions when the father has inquired about their whereabouts. Moreover, although often not as educated or politically aware, she finds it easier to be sympathetic; perhaps in a romantic sense, seeing the dramatic turn of her child becoming an adult, deciding what it is that s/he must do, following the call, and quietly supporting them or her from behind. Yet she must know what the dangers or risks are, otherwise fear and worry will disrupt her efforts and diminish their effectiveness.

We have seen three types of confrontations:

- 1) Parent-initiated confrontation: Through being excessively worried about their children, parents begin to take action in order to put an end to the stressful state of uncertainty concerning what their children are actually involved in. The parents begin their own investigations to find out if the child is attending school or is participating in the boycott, follows the child to see where s/he goes, or make inquiries through other people about the child's activities. As soon as sufficient evidence concerning the child's activities has been obtained, the confrontation takes place, and now the parents demand to know the nature and extent of the child's involvement. In this situation, the parents have come to a gradual acceptance (or maybe a resignation), prior to the confrontation, of the child's activities, and approach the confrontation with a somewhat sympathetic attitude, which is in fact necessary for the child's

disclosure. It seems that the parents adopt the stance that if the child is involved, there is nothing to be done about it, except to clear the air and find out more details to lessen the degree of worry and stress that the parents are going through. This type of confrontation we have found predominantly with the younger children in the third wave category, between 14 and 18 years of age.

2) Child-initiated confrontation, without prior indication of involvement. By this we mean that the involved child in the family approaches the mother or both parents, and provides a self-initiated disclosure of his/her own activities; it may be because he or she feels that the tension the family is too strenuous or unhealthy for all concerned, or because the child knows that inevitably the parents will find out about his or her involvement very soon (through imminent police visit or participation in school SRC or boycott activities). Hence the child approaches the parents to preempt shock or surprise, and to facilitate their understanding of his/her own activities. This has mainly been the case with "senior" activists, usually involved in the second wave, who through a more mature view of the situation, see it as something which is their duty in terms of the struggle, as well as something they owe to their parents. In a few cases, where the parents have always been seen as progressive, or have even been perceived to have inspired the child's involvement, the disclosure is necessary merely as a clearing of the air, and a measure to normalize relations in the household. In other cases, with a deep sense of commitment goes a



sense of responsibility, so that the individual activists have made a clear decision to confront the parents as s/he has gradually come to see them as supporting their activities, doing work for them, and suffering because of their involvement.

3) Child-initiated confrontation, with prior indication of involvement. This is by far the most common type of confrontation, where the child decides to confront the parents and disclose his/her activities after they have had some clear indication of his/her political involvement. These indications include the child's arrest or detention, a police visit to the home, the child's participation in class boycotts, open participation in youth organizations, or, in a few cases, a warning to parents from a third party that police is looking for their child. These are usually the activists who became involved during the latter part of 1985 or thereafter. Their conceptualization of the theoretical aspects of the struggle was therefore never very elaborate, at least as far as the position with respect to their parents was concerned, and their parents rarely had a history of previous involvement or of a sophisticated political awareness. Thus the confrontation took place after the parents had received clear and unambiguous indications that their child was involved in political activities and was being sought after by the police for this reason, rather than their own suspicions about his/her activities. For a large group of these activists, the confrontation occurred after s/he had gone 'on the run', after which it was no longer possible to withhold it from the parents, especially if s/he wanted or needed

their cooperation to make life on the run somewhat easier (money, washing, food, contacts for sleeping places, etc).

After the confrontation, the child's involvement becomes something which affects the entire family; the safety of their child, and the relative well-being of the parents is now a matter of concern to all involved, the whole family. It is therefore essential that they work together so that the child may be able to continue to elude the police. Often parents are also initially instrumental in finding the child a place to sleep in the homes of extended family, though without necessarily letting them know the child is on the run, both in their own area and outside. Eventually, however, the child him/herself becomes more and more responsible for the task of finding safe houses, which is also facilitated by the network of "comrades".

### Engagement

As we have seen, avoidance and ignorance of the political issues and events in the country characterized the parents' negative attitude to the struggle generally. Their fear of family members, children, spouse, or self, of the family as a whole suffering negative consequences due to political involvement served as the main deterrent to such involvement. Nevertheless, due to the children becoming aware and involved through activities outside the home, the parents began to come in close contact with the basic issues surrounding the widespread and violent revolt of 1985/86. After initially having been detrimental to family relations, the issue of the children's active involvement in

these events was addressed by way of a confrontation between the parents and the children, at which some of the immediate grievances and dissonance was sorted out, and which immediately reduced the high stress and tension levels between the various family members.

Thereafter, gradually, the parents found themselves becoming more and more interested in the political events and issues of the time, only through and because of their own children being directly involved. Thus, while the confrontation had provided the parents with a better understanding of what the children were involved in and why, it also served as a direct propellant of their desire to know more about, and to understand more fully, the implications of the political events of 1985/86.

"Ever since then (when my son told me of his involvement), I've been interested." [5:17]

"I just felt that I wanted to know the reason why, to go deep and to find out why the kids were involved."  
[5:18]

It is important to note that after the confrontation, parents only became more interested in the childrens' activities, and that they did not vehemently reject or condemn them, or try to prevent or prohibit the children from continuing them. Rather, they came to a gradual acceptance of their children's involvement, and also gradually came to be sympathetic to the cause of the progressive organizations. While the next section and chapter will take a more detailed look at this process, there were several identifiable factors which contributed to this and which we will now outline.

1) Children's encouragement to become more engaged in progressive activities. The confrontation and subsequent parent-child discussions gave the parents the first step of their contemporary political education, and they were also encouraged by the children to attend progressive functions. Some parents (mostly mothers) began to frequent various meetings, rallies, services, workshops and social gatherings, both inside and outside their area, where they were able to meet other parents in similar situations as well as other individuals who had also been affected by repressive actions (detentions, removals, harrassment, assaults, etc.). These encounters served as eyeopeners for the parents, which slowly contributed to their changing outlook on the South African political situation. They also served as motivating factors for the parents' continued attendance of these activities, as they fulfilled several immediate needs; furthering their interest in understanding the crisis and events of 1985/86, being able to express and share experiences with others in the same situation, and receiving moral and emotional support in groups which maintained a firm anti-apartheid stance.

2) Continued harrassment by police. Due to the children's continued involvement, and the intensifying repressive effort by the state, the visits to the parents' homes continued. Parents were subjected to abuse and intimidation by large contingents of policemen, heavily armed, who came looking for their children. However, as the parents became more experienced in handling these

visits, they gradually became more courageous and more successful in withstanding their aggression.

3) Growing awareness of police actions and state strategy. By attending various meetings, rallies, court cases, and also sometimes while carrying out routine activities in their area, the parents came to witness and hear accounts of police actions in which policemen were indiscriminately beating children or other innocent bystanders and/or chasing children and behaving in perceived outrageous ways.

"Watching them behave as barbarians really set me off!" [5:19]

This experience drastically increased the parents' protective and supportive feelings for their own children, as well as their peers, and made them more antagonistic, even hostile towards the police. At the same time, it also created a greater awareness of what the parents perceived to be the ultimate objective of the state: to continue their domination of Blacks through force and violence if necessary. The SAP, in this context, was seen as the instrument through which the state wanted to instill submission by means of fear in Blacks. As soon as this was understood by the parents, they immediately rejected it and began to approve of and support action against it.

4) Communal activities. By mothers helping each other around the event of their childrens' detentions, parents found comfort, support and inspiration. They found that there were other parents in the same situation and that they by no means were alone in the struggle. Baking and preparing food parcels, arranging transport

for and going to prison together on visits, going to lawyers and relief organizations together, were common activities which bonded parents together, and through which they found renewed strength to carry on. Donations (foodstuffs, clothing, money) and help gave the parents a strong conviction that they were not alone and that, though largely invisible, there was a supportive network of concerned people existing somewhere "out there".

These factors contributed to the parents becoming increasingly aware of the political situation in the country in the midst of the revolt (in addition, of course, to superficial contact through newspapers and TV), as well as increasingly supportive of their children's activities. They were also central to the parents' own becoming involved, because they were the links to the progressive network, materially, emotionally, and psychologically, providing aid, support and sustenance during the transformation process.

### Resolution and Commitment

When we speak of parents 'becoming involved' or of their 'process of involvement', we don't necessarily mean that the parents became active members of extra-parliamentary political organizations. The commonly used expression "to be involved in the struggle" has a rather wide definition or application, and it refers more to considering oneself to be involved when a member of the immediate family is involved, and one participates in spirit with this commitment, because it does affect each individual member in direct ways: having to cope with police

visits in the middle of the night; the child's 'comrades' sleeping over because they can't sleep at home, one's own child being 'on the run', both the threat and reality of detention, and the fear or being informed on. These are all experiences which are part of perceiving oneself as being "involved in the struggle".

In a short space of time, the parents have journeyed from being ignorant, uninterested, even aversive to and discouraging of political involvement, to being supportive, active and determined with respect to the political situation in the country and their childrens' political activities. Essentially, this has taken place because of the active involvement of the youth and students in the 1985/86 rebellion, and the repressive methods used by the state in response to these events. One parent summarized her experience thus:

"Since they shot my cousin in 1967, I have always felt resentment towards the Boers and the police. Then when I saw them beating up the children on the centre, I knew I hated them, but I was never actively involved in political organizations. But that's not to say that I haven't supported the struggle and helped the comrades in the area. In fact, I have done a lot and have no doubt been more involved than most other parents in the area. I hid the children and I will do it again if necessary." [5:20]

Yet it is not necessary to engage in action to consider oneself to be involved in the struggle. The important part is to be for the struggle, and to be committed to the cause the children are fighting for. It is perceived as incompatible to be aware and have an involved child, and not be supportive of their activities.

"How can you just sit back and not contribute to the struggle? You don't have to take up arms or start throwing stones, but give your support. That's also a way of contributing." [5:21]

### Firm Stand Against the State

The confrontation with the children regarding their political involvement actually functions as the inroad to the parents' own interest and engagement in the political issues in South Africa. As the children's active involvement continues and the parents are continually exposed to the police and the justice system, to the progressive culture through attending various functions and activities, and are allowed to build on their emerging understanding of the situation in the country, they come to adopt a firm position of opposition to apartheid and state policies. This may have been dormant and never fully explored because of the nature of the coercive and repressive mode of operation of the state. But now when the parents realize that there exists quite a large and organized culture of resistance, this springs out in full bloom.

"I was impressed with how committed he was when he spoke about his involvement, and I became interested. That's when I started going to rallies and meetings, first here in the area, and later also outside the area. I remember especially the launch of FEDSAW at the Samaj Centre. To hear all these women speak out so openly, and to say how they really felt about all they had gone through really had an effect on me. My eyes sort of opened up to what the police were doing in our area, and it made me start to build up hatred towards them." [5:22]

### Moral and Emotional Support for the Children

As the parents come to take a firm stand against the state and its policies, they are now also in a position to be fully behind



their involved children and to provide wholehearted support, because they have come to believe in the cause that the children are actively pursuing. To be involved in the struggle has become something positive and admirable, and the courage to stand up for one's beliefs is highly valued:

"If he stands up for what he believes in, I can't denounce or criticize him for it. I must respect him, right?" [5:23]

The fear of detention of the children, or even themselves, or the victimization of the family because of involvement in the struggle, no longer serve as such powerful deterrents. The parents are of course still worried about this becoming a reality, but no longer to the extent that they will allow it to prevent them from doing what is necessary to support the children. Not only are the children now perceived as needing this support to succeed, but the parents have come to feel that they should and must succeed, because what they are fighting for is right. The parents are now also ready to fight, alongside their children, and feel strong enough to bear the sacrifices it may entail. The parents have come to take up a fiercely resistant attitude towards the state.

"The pigs are still going to carry on doing this because my child is not going to stop what he is doing. Why should he? What is he doing wrong? I respect him for it because it is what he and I believe in, and I will support him as much as I can for as long as I can." [5:24]

#### Degrees of Involvement

From a point of not having been able to foresee or anticipate that their children "could have been involved in something like

this" [5:25], the parents have now come to perceive themselves as being involved in the struggle. However, the degree of involvement differs, and it seems that the extent and depth to which the child has become involved is a main factor in the extent to which their parents become actively involved. For example, it is likely that a parent will become more actively involved and develop a fuller political awareness if his or her child is detained for a long period of time, say six months, or more, or is held under the Internal Security Act, for example Section 29, than if the child is detained under the Emergency regulation for a minimum period of incarceration, 14 or 28 days. At present, however, we do not have a clear picture of this process, so we will only be able to briefly outline three differing degrees of involvement that have been found.

1) Active support but no participation in structures or activities: The parents in this category have become firm in their support of their children and their political involvement, and believe that they are right in pursuing them, but fear of state repression has prevented their active participation in organized activities. The parents see participation even in support structures as sufficient 'political' involvement to fear police action and harassment directed against themselves. Yet, within the confines of their own homes, they are expressly negative towards the state, and fully supportive of the struggle for political change. Moreover, the parents are fully determined to maintain their stand despite the likelihood of future repression affecting the family, and are prepared emotionally and

practically, to deal with the possible detention of their children.

2) Active support and participation in structures. These parents have come to join various support structures both because of the interest which their children has awakened in them, and because of a lack of a support network of their own, since they did not have established contacts or friendships with other parents of political activists, nor with other 'affected' people, prior to their children becoming politically involved. In the structures, they attend meetings and functions, but they assume largely a passive role, participate sparsely in discussions, and don't often assume responsibilities voluntarily. The parents do see themselves as being involved in the struggle, however, and are wholeheartedly supporting their children; this is in fact the main reason why they started attending. Yet, they have not become committed to the extent that they are actively pursuing their own personal development within the structures.

3) Active support and participation in structures and activities: These parents immediately found themselves unable to 'sit back' and let others do the work after feeling compelled to unite with their children in a common political cause. They are fully committed to the struggle, and the ideals which the progressive organizations are pursuing. They participate in demonstrations, picketting, administrative work, fundraising, and volunteer for various other tasks. They are active in meetings and activities, generating ideas and comments, and begin to live their lives within these structures by also engaging in social activities and

personal associations that are part of the culture of the resistance movement.

In this chapter, we have seen how the attitudes and outlook of parents of political activists have entered a process of transformation through the exposure to stressors and increasing contact with the political conflict which was taking place around them. Initially the childrens' involvement was discouraged and disapproved of, and was the cause of intra-family conflict and tension. However a confrontation, where there is sharing between the parents and the children, led to the engagement of the parents' own political interest. In the following chapter, we will describe the parental transformation in more detail from the point of view of fear.

## CHAPTER 6

### TRANSFORMATIONS IN CONSCIOUSNESS

The study has so far sought to give a descriptive illustration of the experiences of parents of "coloured" political activists against the background of an on-going national socio-political crisis. In Chapter 4, we described concrete experiences of the parents, showing certain main ways in which police presence and repressive action have penetrated their lives, and rendered them even more stressful and burdensome. We described there a series of related situations, which by virtue of both the growing mass support for and state resistance to fundamental social change in South Africa, have come to characterize everyday life for these parents, as well as to serve as an impetus and initiative for a personal transformation for them.

In Chapter 5, we delved deeper into the question of how this transformation has taken place by examining the process whereby the parents have come to be politicized and firmly opposed to the government's apartheid policies, and fully supportive of their children's political activities. Here, then, we saw some of the central consequences of the repressive strategy employed by the state to eradicate political opposition, notably, that the parents have become mobilized to a greater awareness of and interest in the political situation in the country, and have thereby become sympathetic to the aims of progressive organizations working for a new, democratic social order. Moreover, they have come to see themselves as "being involved" in

the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

In the present chapter, we intend examining more closely the parental transformation from the point of view of fear. We will argue that the engineering of a general climate of fear in the townships has been the main aim of state strategy in attempting to crush the political opposition, and this fear has been perceived by the parents as a pervasive aspect of their everyday lives in the townships. Through various processes, however, the parents have come to transform their fear, and these will be described.

#### From Passivity to Action

As we have seen, the population group denominated "coloured" has over the past century been subjected to a whole host of discriminatory, degrading, and punitive measures. Despite these, "coloureds" generally have never rebelled against their oppressors on a broad scale, but have on the contrary been seen as being loyal and faithful to them. In 1976, when repercussions of the Soweto revolt reached the Cape, a militant outbreak of protests and riots by a comparatively small group of students and youth mainly in two Cape Flats communities, Bonteheuwel and Elsies River, was seen as unprecedented (Western 1981). The 1980 schools' boycott had a somewhat wider impact; the boycott itself was conceived in general political terms this time, and a wider participation ensured a wider response and that a larger portion of the "coloured" constituency was affected. Yet, this was only seen as instilling a more militant attitude in a limited part of

the "coloured" quarter, and not as being a general impetus for "coloureds" to revolt against the white minority regime.

In 1980, nevertheless, many parents were mobilized and "fully supported" the students' demand for "a non-racial system of education and for improvement of the conditions at schools" (Molteno 1987 p. 60). The students' skillful organization of the boycott and the execution of mass meetings of parents and teachers appear to have been the main points through which they won the parents over on their side. In addition, the students' continuous reassurances that the boycott was non-violent was a key factor in winning the parents' support.

In 1985/86, however, we are suggesting that there were a number of factors which facilitated the process of parents moving from a position of passivity and complacency to active support for the children, and firm opposition to the state: Firstly, the unprecedentedly wide participation of thousands of "coloured" youth and students in the rebellion, which brought the current political events into an unprecedented number of "coloured" homes; secondly, the fact that the rebellion in itself was from the start conceived in broad political terms, in which a role for the parents was also carved out, and included demands such as an end to the State of Emergency, the withdrawal of security forces from the townships, as well as rejection of the government's "reform-programme", including the tri-cameral parliament; and thirdly, the repressive response by the security forces, which had the consequence of countless deaths and injuries to their children. It was in fact this third factor in particular which we

have found to be the actual catalyst in the parents' change of attitude. Speaking of parents in general, one mother said to me:

"... the minute you touch on their own flesh, that's the minute they will stand up." [6:1]

Thus, we have here the crucial element in the parents' awakening and transformation: while they may have been able to withstand rejection, humiliation, disenfranchisement, discrimination, and economic exploitation by the whites, the point at which they can no longer let it pass has arrived with the application of repression through physical violence to their own children, thereby directly affecting themselves. We have seen in Chapter 5 that in 1976, when the state laid its hands on the children of their (African) neighbours, it made the parents "sit up and take notice" [6:2]. Now, in sharp contrast, when the state is applying direct and brutal violence to their own children, their own flesh and blood, the parents have had to, literally, "stand up and take action". [6:3]

#### From Fear to Resolute Resistance

We may now clearly see the aim of the state's strategy. The application of sheer and brutal force in order to maintain its system of discriminatory and racist practices, in the face of growing protests and increasingly militant dissent, has been designed to inspire submission by means of fear. Under the State of Emergency, the state has been enabled to engender a climate of fear, seemingly as a final weapon to contain and suppress the increasing resistance and defiance of its policies. In mid-1986,



a parent summarized her experience in four words:

"Fear, frustration and anger".[6:4]

With these emotions characterizing daily life for the parents, it is not difficult to see, as we suggested in chapter 4, that this fear has become one of the primary occupations in their everyday lives, nor the extent to which the parents' experience has been stressful. Furthermore, it is now possible to say that the stressors we described above are stressful to the extent that they are feared.

### The Climate of Fear

Daily life in the township is thus primarily characterized by fear for the parent of the political activist. Whether or not it is thematized or brought to awareness, it is nevertheless constantly there, ready to surface at the smallest reminder. In the words of one mother.

"You live in fear of the boers - when are they going to come around next? [6:5]

As the executive instrument of the state's repressive machinery, and the instrument which engenders the climate of fear, in the broadest sense, the SAP is naturally the feared agent. It is the SAP which hunts down and detains their children, comes searching their houses in the middle of the night, makes allegations regarding their childrens' behaviour and threats regarding action against them, which are extremely upsetting for the parents, and generally seems intent on using any methods it sees fit to

eliminate political opposition to the state. Moreover, as we have seen in Chapter 3, a discriminatory attitude appears to prevail within the SAP with respect to Black South Africans, and the parents are well aware that the treatment meted out to them differs significantly from that given to their white counterparts.

In a very direct sense, the aspect which the parents fear the most is that their child/children will be injured, maimed or killed by the police, and this feared possibility gives rise to tremendous anxiety. This has coincided with the parents' growing awareness of violent and indiscriminate police actions, and with the spread of unrest to the Western Cape. Prior to that, for the parents with children who were actively involved in extra-parliamentary political organizations, political involvement was not a great source of fear or worry. At the time, the risk of them becoming victims of violent police actions was not seen as being imminent. Because of the rapidly proliferating violent climate in the Western Cape in 1985, and the increasingly forceful methods used by the state to quell it, however, the level of fear experienced by the parents rose dramatically.

At the same time emerged numerous specific fears relating to the SAP. Above we have described some of the most central ones: police presence, police visits, having a child on the run, having a child in detention, and being informed on by other people in the area. we will let several quotes illustrate how the parents felt:

"You always see the Casspirs around with those evil men,

at the schools and everywhere in the area. You just think of him dying there. Must our people always be taken away or killed like Ashley Kriel?" [6:6]

"I would say there is a 50% chance of the children being arrested if they go out. For example, there might be stonethrowing at the centre, and you send the kid to the shop for a loaf of bread. It's simply a case of them happening to be at the wrong place at the wrong time." [6:7]

"Sometimes, I even get this funny feeling: 'tonight is Tuesday and they are going to come knocking. I'm going to prepare myself. And then I can't sleep. I will sit up and wait for them.'" [6:8]

"We parents never thought that we would put a child on the road so fast. We feel much safer when the child is out than in; we feel unsafe to sleep when the child is under our roof." [6:9]

"When they knocked on the door that night, I thought: Oh Here, it's now or never, like this was the horrible moment I had been afraid of all along. I thought: everything is going to collapse now because they are going to find him and my son is going to jail for I don't know how long." [6:10]

Thus, the parents were constantly anticipating police action directed at their children, giving rise to tremendous fear. The threat of it becoming reality appears to have been the most prominent aspect of its perceived fearsomeness, and this threat was ever-present.

With the intensification of resistance and repression during 1986 and thereafter, however, parents' fears were no longer limited to their children. They now began to fear for the safety of all family members generally, and for their own specifically. The parents, having come to see themselves as "being involved", by virtue of standing behind and lending increasingly active support

to their children in their activities, were now afraid that this fact would prompt the redirection of police action against themselves.

"Well, I'm still scared, but I'm scared for myself also now. You're scared that when you go to meetings, the police will find out and detain you." [6:11]

"Yes, I am afraid that I will be detained. That's why as many people as I come across, I ask them how it was there inside and how they were treated. If I was detained, I wouldn't be able to handle being away from my children." [6:12]

Thus, the growing involvement of the parents in the struggle has prompted exactly the same fears as their children experienced. Although, in the vast majority of cases, they have not become "activists" or members of political organizations per se, they have begun to attend meetings, rallies, and various functions hosted by progressive organizations, and now think that this is sufficient grounds for being detained; such is their perception of the police and their methods.

As a result of this, parents also believe that the family as a whole or other individual members of the family will be victimized by the police.

"I saw the police vans drive past, and I saw them point at my house. The next day, a car with four civilian policemen drove past my house while myself and x were standing outside, and they were looking and laughing at us. They turned around at the shop and drove past again, this time laughing loud at us. I think they must have something in store for us because they are really watching us." [6:13]

Thus, we can now begin to see the full extent to which this fear

of the police penetrates the parents' everyday lives. The feared possibilities are always, in some way, present, and become preoccupations for the parents, reaching into every aspect of their lives. One mother illustrated this succinctly:

"..every time you hear a police van going past here, and you get used to the way they sound, my mind comes back to the situation we are in." [6:14]

For people who only recently were peaceful, law abiding, God fearing and hard working individuals, it is now a strange transformation to have become security conscious, withholding of information, attuned to police movement, and afraid of police action. In other words, due to their fear, the parents have developed something which resembles a "criminal" consciousness. For instance, the parent may suddenly initiate conversation with the child regarding security matters, which they have not done previously: the child should not let political pamphlets lie around the house in case of a police visit, or when other activists come visiting, they should not enter or leave in a group, rather they should leave one by one in an inconspicuous manner.

Further, even while carrying out daily business, parents are habitually monitoring police movements in the area, whether or not they are engaged in action, or a state of unrest prevails in the area. They will notice police vehicles, follow them with their eyes until they disappear out of sight, and if they stop, the parents will attempt to see what they are doing. During an interview with a mother, she told me:

"I can tell you that just in the short time I've been sitting here talking to you, just since you arrived here at my house, 4 police vans have passed outside." [6:15]

### Exposure = Desensitization

With repeated exposures to all these frightening and stressful situations, the parents appear to come to see them as less fearsome. However, as we remarked above, this does not necessarily mean that they experience them as less stressful, since the experienced post-traumatic effect appears to remain largely unaffected. Yet, the parents seem to experience less fear in confronting the police for several reasons: Firstly, now being supportive of their children and their activities, the parents experience it as imperative to be protective of them, and defend them in the face of the police; secondly, the parents gradually come to believe that their fearful anticipation of the policemen's actions against themselves in the confrontation is exaggerated - they have found that they have to withstand verbal abuse and intimidation, but no further action is usually taken; and finally, finding that they no longer feel as intimidated in the confrontation, they gain confidence in their own ability to cope with and handle the situation.

In this way do the parents gradually conquer their fear of the police, and each time they succeed in standing up to them in the confrontation situation, they feel that they have won a small victory. They become less and less intimidated by the appearance manner of the policemen, and more and more confident in their own strength in a future confrontation with the police.

"I am still very afraid of the police, but I am much stronger now. I am strong enough to handle anything they could possibly do to me. If I could, I would stay out of their way, but if I must face them, I can handle it." [6:16]

In many cases, parents have had to endure repeated visits to their home by the police in the space of several months, to the extent that they become accustomed to their presence in the house, their manner, questions, searches, etc. Coupled with a growing anger at the policemen for disrupting their lives, verbally abusing them and insinuating that they have not fulfilled their parental duties since the children have become involved, making serious and often preposterous allegations regarding their children and/or making threats regarding what they can expect when the police find their children, which facilitate the parents' assumption of a resolute resistance in the confrontation, the parents become desensitized to the fearsomeness which every imagined or actual contact with the SAP previously inspired.

"Oh Here, it went on for months on end they were working on me because they wanted me to bring him in, but then I got tough. At first I was afraid that they were going to lock me up or take my other children, but after that I got tough. I was even looking forward to them coming. I didn't care if they were going to lock me up anymore." [6:17]

#### Living with the Fear: Resoluteness

The process of the parents' desensitization to the feared agent is thus due partly to their growing experience of confronting it, partly to their mounting anger, and partly to their growing solidarity with and support for their children. Although it was

initially a cause of friction and conflict in the family, they have now come to be committed enough to the progressive ideals that the children are fighting for, not only because they have become convinced of the correctness of fighting for freedom and the abolition of apartheid, but to a large extent also because they will stand by their children, their own flesh and blood, no matter what. One mother told the security police:

"If my child comes home and he is hungry, I'll feed him; if he is dirty, I'll clean him. He is my child. I brought him into this world. Are you saying that I must now turn my back on my child ? [6:18]

Moreover, the family now having been affected by the repressive efforts of the state, the parents have had to confront their fears. They have directly experienced the methods of the feared agent, and have been sufficiently close to other feared possibilities to have imagined, even glimpsed, what it would be like if they became reality. The parents thereby also go through a certain process of desensitization to the potential effects of the actions of the feared agent. Although the SAP and its repressive methods are still feared, it is no longer allowed to prevent parents' active support for the struggle.

"After my son was detained, I felt so strongly that what I was doing was right. It didn't matter if they detained me or what they did to me. I would say what I felt and do what I liked. I didn't care who was listening or watching me." [6:19]

Thus, due to their repeated encounters with the feared agent, the parents have come to transform their fears, and to arrive at a position of resolute resistance to the feared agent; they have now become "hard".



"Yes, the struggle has changed me, it has made me hard...That's the way the struggle made me." [6:20]

"Every single day I see a police van, it makes my heart hard." [6:21]

Once the parents have reached this stage, they will assume their stand of resolute resistance in their encounters with the SAP. Furthermore, this resoluteness becomes a general outlook which permeates their daily lives. To "be strong" is necessary in the face of repression and the persecution of political dissenters, particularly for the mothers who often bear the brunt of the burden of their effects on the family. In addition, it is recognized that the police can and do exploit any weakness displayed by a family member; it now becomes a matter of priority not to expose these weaknesses to them.

"If you show them that you're weak, they will just walk right in and do what they want. I won't allow them, I will never allow them to do that." [6:22]

#### Support from the Progressive Network

In their efforts to sustain the attitude of resolute resistance, the parents are not without support. Since the early 1980's, the Western Cape has witnessed the formation of numerous organizations and associations which broadly fall under the sphere of resistance to apartheid (Matiwana and Walters 1985). In the last four years, moreover, this process has accelerated. During the present crisis, since 1984, a host of structures have sprung up which aim at supporting and/or offering assistance to victims of political repression or their families and relatives. Indirectly (lately more and more directly), their operations have

also served to bolster the target groups psychologically and emotionally for several reasons:

i) The victims and their dependants receive support in a situation which is negatively reinforced by the state, and in which they are initially prone to believe that none will assist them.

ii) The structures assume (at least indirectly) an anti-apartheid stance by supporting anti-apartheid activists and their families.

iii) Some of the structures have explicitly adopted an anti-apartheid stance, and in addition to supportive efforts, organize functions, workshops, talks, and services from this point of view, or collaborate with political organizations on progressive platforms.

iv) The victims and their families are able to meet other victims and their families through the structures, with whom they can share their experiences and learn from each other.

Thus, the progressive network is in fact fulfilling two major functions; the financial and material assistance to the victims and their families, as well as the psychological and emotional support of these individuals. The network's efforts thereby also serve to reinforce their outlook of resoluteness. In actual fact, there are two aspects to the network; one more informal and which exists in the parents own area or township, and one broader, formal network of organizations with organized

activities and functions. We will now describe these two aspects and their specific function in this context in more detail.

In-community network: Since the eruption of the present crisis, extra-parliamentary political organizations have enjoyed a tremendous boost in popularity and support. Due to increased repression from the state, however, they have been forced to organize on progressively more grassroots levels. Consequently, their structures have become more and more localized, decentralized and informal. The last few years have seen the springing up of many different kinds of localized structures in communities all around the Western Cape; student organizations, youth groups, parent-teacher-student associations, parents support groups, civic associations, church groups, area- and street committees.

In their own area or township, the parents come in touch with a loosely organized network of individuals, active in the local structures, who have come to be the local resource people of these structures. In their spare time, they are constantly engaged in the continued relief efforts and mobilization of fellow residents. They have become fully committed to the national democratic struggle, and are engaged in it as a way of life, and to the development of the progressive community in their own area. Thus, they are in it full-time, and are constantly called upon to perform some service in this regard; help someone, go visit parents of detainees, organize transport for parents to court or prison to visit their children, attend

or organize meetings, write letters on behalf of someone, etc.

When repression comes to affect a family, therefore, these resource people are normally the family members' first contact with the progressive network. Parents are sometimes referred to them by a friend or a neighbour who has knowledge of or contact with the network, but the structures also have their own 'outreach-programmes': by virtue of monitoring the situation in the community, they are aware of who the targets and victims of repression are, and can send someone to the family's home to inform them of their rights, how to obtain legal or financial assistance, of existing support structures in the community and their functions, as well as to share their own experience of a similar situation. In this way, a number of the parents' immediate needs are addressed; they receive information regarding the practical handling of the newly developed situation, they also receive understanding and sympathy from someone with similar experiences, and they are able to confide in someone how they themselves experience the situation, bringing relief from the fear of speaking to someone who might inform on them, of being alone in a time of crisis, and of not being able to handle it on their own.

"I didn't know that my son had gone to (event). When it got later and later and he didn't return from school, I got more and more worried. Finally, at about 9 o'clock in the evening, I phoned my sister-in-law, who is also involved, and she said that a lot of children had been picked up but she didn't know how many or if my son was one of them. She said I must go to X to find out. 'Where does she stay', I asked her, and she said 'it's the last house as you come up the road'. I said 'The UDF-house? No ways, I'm not going there, ha, ha, ha, (laughter). Well, in any case, I went there and X told me that she

wasn't sure if my son was among those picked up, but she was going to find out for me. But she told me I mustn't worry because there were doctors who had seen to them, and they had lawyers already and everything was cared for - bail, and all that. I was very relieved to hear that, and to be able to talk to someone who knew what was going on and who really understood what I was going through." [6:23]

As the parents interest in and commitment to the progressive struggle deepens, the in-community to the progressive network thereby also serves as a gateway and link to the broader progressive network.

Broader Local Network: Since the eruption of the present crisis in 1984, a host of structures have sprung up to fill perceived gaps in the provision of services to individuals affected by state policies, and/or charged with politically related offences. These structures mainly fall within the ambit of the UDF and related organizations, and include church organizations, professional organizations, legal groups, advice and monitoring services which specialize in offering relief and support with respect to politically related issues, monitoring repression, and advocating for equal human rights in the country.

In the latter half of 1985 alone, more than 10 such organizations were formed in the greater Cape Town area (Matiwana and Walters 1985), responding to the immediate need of the current crisis situation. Both 1986 and 1987 saw the rapid proliferation of organizations, many of which developed locally based branches and affiliates. The Advice Office Forum, for example, was founded in 1984, and initially had one central office in Hanover Park. Today, there are more than 14 local advice offices in as many

communities, virtually every community in the Western Cape has some form of informal link to the Forum, and affiliated offices have emerged in several rural areas in the Cape Province.

The support which these structures offer serves in various ways to reinforce and bolster the parents growing awareness of the inequality of the socio-political conditions in the country as well as to reaffirm their perceptions of injustice and discrimination regarding their own situation as parents of political activists and individuals engaged in active opposition to state policies. Many of these structures operate not merely on an ad-hoc basis, but offer regular services; workshops, educational programmes, support groups, lessons, social outings and functions, etc. For the parents, and the individuals served by these structures generally, it becomes more and more possible to live one's life within these structures, circles of people, and activities, whereas in the past, prior to becoming interested in their children's activities, they felt isolated, and had very little social as well as formal contact with the progressive network. The growing involvement in progressive structures thus becomes a cornerstone in the successful maintenance of a resistant outlook; without organizational support and reinforcement, the parents would remain isolated and be much more prone to succumb to ideological pressures to conform to the status quo.

"For me it has been the feeling that we are all together, and that we can help each other in need. You know that there is someone you can turn to. Sometimes, if there is a meeting on Wednesday, by Thursday or Friday I feel very depressed. Then I go

around to X and come back feeling much better, as if now I can face it all again." [6:24]

"I enjoy going to those meetings; you can learn a lot from other peoples' past experiences. You learn from them and then you know exactly how to handle those situations. Last year, I was a delegate at a national conference in the Eastern Cape, and what I really learned was that our experience here in the Western Cape has been nothing compared to what people have experienced in other areas, particularly in Natal and the Eastern Cape. Those people have really suffered. Then you feel that your problems are minor ones, they are nothing by comparison, and that gives you strength to carry on." [6:25]

### Entering a Communal Mode

In sharp contrast to the pre-1985 outlook of the parents which we described above - uninvolved, disinterested, materially oriented, selfish - there is now a new spirit emerging among the progressive "coloured" community. They are no longer simply concerned with their own and their family's financial and material situation and progress. A wider concern for those involved in the struggle has emerged, forged by the common struggles and sacrifices made over the last few years. In addition, the family has now been directly affected by state repression; losing one's material possessions and/or advantages matters little in comparison to the possibility or reality of losing a family member.

We are also suggesting that the hardships endured since the 1985/86 rebellion in conjunction with the perception of belonging to a small, persecuted group in a precarious situation has strengthened the cohesion and solidarity amongst the parents. It is therefore seen as more important to be concerned about and help each other. Without internal strength and unity, which has

ensued out of the commonality of experiences and victimization, the group faces obliteration and annihilation.

One way in which this has been achieved has been the giving of support to other parents when they are in a difficult and stressful situation, i.e. when a family member is on the run or in detention. One may then give support in the form of money or needed articles such as toiletries, clothing or food, and in the act of giving, one simultaneously displays solidarity both with the group as well as with the struggle itself. One may also assist other parents' children who are on the run, and therefore unable to go home; feeding them, washing for them, giving them a place to sleep, rest or relax in one's home, or giving them pocketmoney or assistance with various practical problems. Indirectly, the parent is thereby helping the parents of these children, as well as his or her own children, one trusts that when one's own child is in a similar situation, other parents will do the same for him or her. This thus becomes an ethic for the progressive parents.

For those parents on the receiving end, the experience of the solidarity shown by the other parents is tremendous and very positive. This is particularly so when it occurs when they first become "affected" by repression, and they are experiencing the occasion as especially traumatic.

"When my son was detained, a whole group of mothers came here to help prepare the food to take to him in jail. And nothing of it came out of my own pocket. It came from everywhere, it came from above. it was fantastic." [6:26]



Having become involved to this extent, the parents perceive it as if they have reached a point of no return. Once involved and committed to supporting the struggle and their children in their activities, the parents find it impossible to disengage and return to the pre-state. Instead, the building of unity amongst parents and children, and within the progressive ranks generally, becomes prioritized. In a meeting, a mother stood up and said:

"What we need is to be united, not divided. We must put all these personal differences behind us and work together to face the state. We must try to understand each other, and come together amongst ourselves, because when we are not together, it only benefits them. We must stand together with our children and be strong in the face of what's coming." [6:27]

At the same time, when it is no longer possible to turn back, only to forge ahead, it is recognized that progress is dependent on joint efforts and actions. One feels compelled to fulfill one's own part of the commitment; in order to be able to feel part of the progressive community, and to share in the future victory, one has to contribute by participating in one's full capacity.

"I want to become more actively involved. I can't see myself turning the other way now after my eyes have been opened. I can never see that happening. I can't sit back and let everybody else do the dirty work and then sit back and enjoy the end result. I want to be there and be a part of whatever happens when it happens." [6:28]

Through their experiences, which have basically come about through their childrens' active involvement in the 1985/86 rebellion, the parents of "coloured" political activists have not only become aware of the political issues of the day and the

national liberation struggle, but also committed, active participants in this process. The emergent communal spirit is a result of common experiences of persecution and victimization, as well as the building of supportive grassroots networks by the progressive organizations. A wider concern for those involved in the struggle thus emerges, forging solidarity and unity of purpose.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has dealt with the experiences of "coloured" political activists during a State of Emergency in South Africa. It has been a descriptive exploration of the ways in which their daily lives, attitudes and outlook have been affected by political repression directed at their children, actively involved as political activists in the militant revolt against apartheid and the white minority regime which began in 1984. In particular, we have tried to articulate how individual responses to being thus affected have interfaced with specific socio-political conditions and practices, in an attempt to do relevant social psychology in a context where mainstream theory and practice is part and parcel of the practices of domination and oppression.

In terms of the scope of the thesis, therefore, it would have been inappropriate and misleading not to consider the context of the growing resistance to apartheid and the increasingly violent methods used by the state to eradicate opposition. From a theoretical perspective, moreover, it would have served to perpetuate the general objectives of state strategy, to ignore this context; it was argued that a social psychology which intends to do justice to the interacting and interdependent micro- and macro levels of social reality must consider and attempt to articulate the workings of social structures and historical conditions in their concrete manifestations in

individuals' lives.

In this chapter, we will attempt to summarize the main findings and arguments of the thesis, chapter by chapter. Thereafter, we will enter into a brief discussion of some important implications of these findings and arguments, and suggest future areas of research.

By way of an introduction and background to the thesis, Chapter 1 traced the eruption of the present political crisis in 1984 and its spread to various centres in the country. The 1985/86 rebellion in the Western Cape was then described in more detail and gave special attention to the role of youth and students. We saw here that their role was central in bringing to expression a large part of the grievances against the state, through militant and violent action, and thereby also contributing to the escalation of protest and resistance. The massively repressive state response which followed indirectly affected the broadening of the front of the democratic struggle itself, and provided black and "coloured" communities with new grievances and renewed anger, resulting in the "spiral of violence" which came to characterize the 1985/86 rebellion (Foster 1986).

The youth and student movement had gained momentum, through the 1980 schools boycott, and by the time a regional umbrella body, CAYCO, was formed in 1983, a strong theoretical position on the liberation struggle and the role of the youth within this struggle had materialized. A key aspect concerned the conceptualization of workers and parents as co-partners in the

struggle, and working actively towards mobilizing these groups to their own level of political awareness and action. Although for a time the CAYCO position was ignored by a "new" generation of young, militant youth who became politicized and involved during the 1985/86 rebellion, we showed that, with the prevailing social turmoil and repressive police tactics directed at themselves greatly facilitating the process, the youth and students generally succeeded in this endeavour.

In Chapter 3, we sought to, as a development of the context in which to situate the stressors in parents' everyday lives which the empirical data has yielded, examine the methods of operation of the SAP, through both a historical and a current perspective. We drew attention to the fact that institutionalized racial segregation has not only had detrimental psychological effects on Blacks, but also resulted in reinforcing a discriminatory attitude, both in terms of informal preconceptions of law enforcement officers as well as official policy decisions. With the increasing active opposition to apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa in recent years, increasingly harsh methods have been used against Blacks generally and those involved in extra-parliamentary political activity specifically. Conceived as a "total strategy" to combat revolutionary forces and insurgency, observable SAP strategy has gradually become absorbed into an encompassing national security management system as frequent reorganizations and changes in strategy, particularly in the 1980's, have failed to curb the "revolutionary onslaught" against the state. State strategy has thus centered on the containment

and control of blacks on all levels, utilizing a reform/repression approach, where, while increasing repression in order to remain control, a carefully designed reform programme has been undertaken in order to appease the international community, so indispensable to the South African state.

During the turmoil of recent years, it has been very difficult for social scientists to access data relating to effects of the civil unrest and violence taking place. Nevertheless, several recent studies have documented both individual and group responses to these phenomena. The present study aimed to continue to document, in a concrete and descriptive way, individuals' responses to civil unrest, political persecution, and violence, in order to further understanding of the particular South African situation.

Chapter 4 described, in a detailed way, the experiences of parents of "coloured" political activists with respect to a number of stressors confronting them in their residential areas. In our treatment of the first of these, we discovered that parents live in a fearful state of anticipating police presence and action, and that this has consequences in their daily lives in terms of how they structure their daily routines and their use of time, and an experienced compulsion to monitor police movements and action.

We thereafter elucidated the second stressor, the event of police coming to search one's home in pursuit of one's children, "subversive" or illegal articles or documents, or information

which may facilitate the apprehension of a political activist and/or contribute to the elimination of the "revolutionary climate". Here, a certain structure of the event of a police visit to one's home was explicated, in which it was found that fear of what the police will or may do to oneself or other family members, the experienced guilt from being portrayed as undesirables by authority figures and hence the state, and the alteration in one's state-of-mind in the confrontation situation itself were the most prominent aspects. It was further discovered that the repeated experience of a police visit to one's home itself serves as an affirmation of one's own emerging outlook, as well as a reinforcement of one's identification with the position and aims of the progressive organizations. The overzealousness displayed by the policemen, their manner and the reasons given for the children being sought were found to be the most stressful aspects of this event.

To have a child 'on the run' from the police for political reasons was also found to be an extreme stressor, in fact the most persistently stressful situation as perceived by the parents. The lack of contact and communication over extended periods, the extent of disruption caused to the family by the child's absence, and the experienced parental trauma when the child comes home for a brief visit, were the aspects identified as the most stressful of this situation. The impression that their children are more severely persecuted than "normal" criminals gave rise to strong fears concerning the severity of the "crimes" that the children had allegedly perpetrated, and the

treatment they were likely to receive if or when they were apprehended.

The event of the detention-without-trial of a child was also found to be an extremely stressful situation, partly because a sometimes lengthy anticipation of this event on the part of the parents, which enhances their fear and which is psychologically taxing for them. Here the particularly stressful aspects were also found to be the perceived disruption of the family, stigma due to negative attitudes perceived to be directed towards the parents in their residential area and in the workplace, the knowledge that their children are being subjected to interrogation, often with the help of torturous methods, as well as the way the parents perceive themselves as being treated by the police and the legal machinery due to their being parents of political opponents of the state.

Finally, another stressor experienced by the parents of political activists in the township is the constant fear of being informed on by others in the neighbourhood or social circle. With the police having stepped up its reliance on informers, this has made the parents feel as though they are in a very insecure position in that any of their neighbours, whom they don't know very intimately and with whom they have never shared any of the experiences relating to political activity, may be a paid police informer. Thus, to a large extent due to the destruction of the close-knit relationships which were an intrinsic part of neighbour- and extended family networks in the area of residence



prior to the forced removals in the 1960's and 1970's, the parents live in constant insecurity and fear of being informed on.

Chapter 5 sought to describe the process whereby, due to the kinds of experiences which were the subject of chapter 4, the parents of "coloured" political activists have gradually come to be more politicized, and to perceive themselves as being involved in the national democratic struggle. Certain historical factors with respect to the political treatment of "coloured" people in the 20th century were outlined as having had a bearing on the attitudes which the parents were described to have embraced prior to becoming aware that their children were politically involved. The gradual political disenfranchisement of "coloured" people, Group Areas removals, and educational discrimination were argued to have been central in the formation of the pre-1985 attitudes.

The parents' growing suspicions that their children were involved in the 1985/86 rebellion initially caused tension and friction within the family and precipitated a confrontation between the parents and the children. Through this confrontation, some of the immediate problems were resolved, as parental frustration decreased with increased knowledge of the childrens' activities, and an interest in their activities, and the programmes of community-based progressive political organizations generally, developed. With the continuation of police repression against their children and the progressive community generally, the parents became mobilized against the state, and involved, in differing degrees, in "the struggle".

The final chapter, Chapter 6, sought to document transformations in socio-political consciousness which have transpired among the parents due to the kinds of experiences they have been subjected to in the last few years. We saw that they have rallied from a position of complacency and passivity to one of support for and active involvement in the liberation struggle in South Africa. State strategy was here identified as having been engineered to induce a climate of fear in the townships, by means of which to inspire submission and eradicate opposition and resistance, and this fear has been a central aspect of the parents' experience. Simultaneously, however, this fear has also been a precipitating factor in their awakening, growing support for and involvement in their childrens' activities, and the forging of a unifying communal spirit, giving rise to a belief in the moral correctness of their position and thereby a firm resoluteness to oppose the state.

On the most general level, this descriptive analysis has demonstrated that the parents' experience is above all characterized by conflict. This is the case on an inter-personal level, in terms of their contact and relations with their children, other parents, extended family and neighbours, as well as individual policemen and the state in general, but primarily on an intra-personal level. Their experience of the various stressors and situations which have been described in this thesis has been contradictory and conflictual on several different levels, their role and responsibility in child rearing, their civic responsibility in terms of a broader political commitment

and involvement, the process whereby they have come to see themselves as progressive, as well as their roles as mothers and fathers in a family situation, being responsible in certain ways for and to other family members.

Their response to this conflict is an affirmation above all of their role as parents, because the bottom line, in essence, is their bond and solidarity with their children. They have been able to transcend the most difficult and fear-evoking barriers because of the imminent danger and crises which confronted their children. The well-being, security and safety of their children are the most important concerns for them.

If we examine the point regarding the nature of the parents' experience as conflict, another significant point becomes apparent, which concerns the issue of emotions as a key catalyst to personal change, and therefore social change, in this context. If we consider that their transformation was directly precipitated by their childrens' involvement in the 1985/86 rebellion and the nature of the security force response to these and subsequent events, we may raise the question of whether or not their transformation would have taken place was it not for them being immersed in a highly charged emotional situation. The comparison we can make is between the parents responses to the security force actions during the 1976 and the 1985/86 rebellions respectively (see Chapters 5 and 6). When there was no immediate personal stake involved for the parents, the events raised their awareness and, to some extent, their level of concern for being

next in line as victims of the same type of action, but they did not serve to engage nor involve the parents. The parents' emotional investment in the situation has therefore been an essential component of their experience.

We would now like to raise several methodological considerations. This thesis has striven to be consistent with regard to the process and level of explanation of the phenomena under study; it has attempted to explicate lived meanings of experience within the context of specific historical and contemporary South African practices. Thereby, the thesis has provided an understanding of individual responses in a particular situation, in which previous research has been scarce, and data has been difficult to access. Furthermore, the thesis has provided an understanding of the methods of the SAP and state strategy with respect to the repression of political resistance, justifiable, indeed imperative, in the light of the absence of basic human, social, and political rights for a large majority of citizens in this country. In so doing, this thesis has also provided an understanding of the broader socio-political context, wherein both these processes have taken place, and its relationship to the individual experiences, something which, in terms of our theoretical framework was essential for the conduct of a social psychology of relevance to the South African situation, and which attempts to counteract the falling prey to establishment modes of discourse and ideology.

This thesis has therefore demonstrated the usefulness of the ethnographic method in the South African context, something which

is underscored by its suitability to research the particular conditions which prevail here. In the light of the prominence of emotions in the processes under study, it appears also well suited to further studies of this kind. Thus, while we primarily want to encourage further research into stress and psychological sequelae of political repression and persecution, we may also have been able to encourage the use of similar methods as in the present study.

Several authors have drawn parallels of the South African situation with that in other countries where internal civil unrest has been rife, particularly Argentina, and Northern Ireland (Gibson 1986, Foster 1987, etc). We have found that psychological research into the effects of civil unrest and political repression in Argentina bears strong resemblances to some of our own findings, and we will close the present study by drawing out some of those similarities.

During the regime of the military junta in Argentina between 1976 and 1983, the existence of a general climate of fear was argued to have been the most pervasive and effective method of fighting the political opposition, and as the factor which had the most serious psychological effects on its victims (Allodi 1980, Darrio 1985). Detention without trial was used extensively during this period, and a total silence from official sources with respect to their incarceration (hence the term "disaparecidos" - "the disappeared ones" became the customary way of referring to them), was diagnosed as the most fear evoking aspect.

"Official secrecy and suppression of information was the main method of psychological inducement ... Silence, in fact, was used to reinforce the fear and terror of the people." (Darrio 1985 p.2)

We have argued that in this country, the application of violent and brutal methods has been the primary strategy of suppressing political opposition, and in a preventative capacity, one of its main components being the engineering of a climate of fear. While forceful and brutal violence was used to quell unrest, protests and overt expressions of political dissent, an intimidating climate of fear was used as the deterrent to becoming involved in and actively engaging in protest and resistance activities. This difference to the Argentinian situation makes sense in the context of the colonial history of South Africa, and the traditional methods of domination used by the white rulers. Even in present-day South Africa, corporal punishment remains a central disciplinary measure in the schools as well as in the judicial system.

However, the effectiveness of the South African strategy has most certainly been enhanced by a complimentary use of silence. Government censorship, press curbs, banning of publications, meetings and conferences, and official secrecy and silence on unrest incidents, detentions, and activities of progressive organizations have indeed strengthened the fear of the state and its violent methods; it leaves individuals in a vacuum, with only the fearful possibility of the repressive violence of the state in anticipation.

In Argentina, Darrio maintains that the authorities' "guilt-

inducement campaigns" (1985 p.2), was one of the main weapons used in preventing individuals from identifying with and becoming associated with the political opposition. The further prohibition of criticism of the state, and the propagation of a blind belief in the correctness of the position and actions of the state completed this picture. This point also closely parallels the situation in South Africa. In Chapter 4, we saw that the presence of guilt as one of the main characteristics of the parents' responses to the SAP in the confrontation situation, and the presence of stigma and negative consequences in the event of one's child being detained. However, it appears that the use of guilt has not been exploited to the same extent in South Africa as in Argentina, where the campaign has taken on strong ideological connotations; non-conformism is propagated as pathological, punishable both by harsh disciplinary measures and social ostracism.

In Argentina, furthermore, it appears that the emergent resistance and genuine understanding of the situation amongst "affected" people was a therapeutically positive agent. Resistance emerged here predominantly through the formation and mobilization of various social groups, and the support generated within these structures resulted in the strengthening of identification, empathy and understanding necessary to withstand ideological intimidation and repression. Certain key, involved persons were suggested to have functioned "as actual health agents" (Darrio 1985 p. 2), as they either themselves recruited others to join the groups or served as referral agents to other

existing groups (Allodi 1981, Darrio 1985).

The same pattern has also emerged in the present study, as we saw in Chapter 6, where, on the one hand, individuals have actively served as resource people in their communities, and functioned as the outreach and referral agents of progressively aligned structures. On the other hand, the growth of an entire network of organizations and structures with a predominantly progressive, non-racial, and democratic aim with respect to a future order in South Africa has reinforced the resolve of families and individuals in their newfound commitment to political change in South Africa, and facilitated the process of organization and formation of local support structures in the townships.

The results of the present study also have several features in common with a recent local study, the work of Shefer and Hofmeyer (1988). In their study of psychological sequelae of police action at UCT, Shefer and Hofmeyer focused particularly on emotional responses and changes in their subjects' political consciousness. Particular aspects of their findings are in close correspondence with those of the present study, notably the predominance of feelings of fear in confrontations with the police, be they violent or non-violent, in the context of protest and resistance to apartheid versus the enforcers of an oppressive and discriminatory social order. Further similarities include the findings that this confrontation with the police had effects on the daily routine of those involved, altering activities or making it difficult to execute certain activities; that it produced recurring images of the events and a preoccupation with



thinking about them, and that it created a desire to verbalize one's experience and to express what one is feeling. These all converge on the impression that this confrontation therefore is a very traumatic situation, stressful to the extent that it evokes fear in the individual, and that it has certain post-traumatic sequelae.

Moreover, both the work of Shefer and Hofmeyer and the present study strongly suggest that these kinds of experiences precipitate changes in the affected individuals' political belief systems, and in their desire to themselves become more involved in political activities. Shefer and Hofmeyer have succinctly illustrated how individuals experience police violence and its effect on their political attitudes:

"They try to beat your beliefs out of you. In fact, it doesn't work. they just intensify those feelings. They politicise you even more." (Quoted in Shefer and Hofmeyer 1988 p.27)

On a psychological level, therefore, we may say that we have been able to substantiate assertions by SAIRR (1985) to the effect that the police actions in the townships turned "many black and "coloured" people, previously uninvolved, strongly against the police" (p. 4). In fact, these actions were seen as causing "great anger" and "new grievances, thereby making a major contribution to causing the spread of unrest" (p. 2). Dawes and de Villiers (1987), in a similar vein, found that parents of youth charged with, and eventually convicted of, public violence in politically related circumstances felt themselves becoming

more involved in political activities and more politicized due to their childrens' situation.

We are now also in a position to answer two questions which were posed early in the thesis and concern, firstly, the long-term efficacy of the repressive machinery in successfully quelling the resistance, and secondly, whether or not group Areas have in fact been dysfunctional for apartheid. We must answer the first question in the negative and the second in the affirmative, and this must, from the point of view of the state, be seen as counter-productive and undesirable. Overt police repression, rather than eradicating resistance, appears instead to have had the effect of fuelling and spreading it, mobilizing and uniting communities against the police specifically and the apartheid regime generally. The Group Areas have made it possible for "coloured" people to unite, on the foundation of their children rebuilding those links which, for the parents, were broken in the removals to the townships, and engaging in overt and militant opposition to the state. The advent of violent repression directed at their children, and at themselves, has been a terrifying, traumatic and stressful experience for the parents, but also a unifying one, which has restored their feelings of self-worth and dignity.

## APPENDIX 1

### LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

#### PARENTS

Interviewee 1: Female, Christian, single mother of 5, aged 53. Employed in garment industry and active in unions in the workplace. Interviewed thrice.

I 2: Female, Christian, separated mother of 3, aged 49. Employed in garment industry. Interviewed twice.

I 3: Male, Apostolic, married father of 2, aged 58. Surviving on disability grant. Interviewed twice.

I 4: Female, Moslem, married mother of 4, aged 41. Housewife. Interviewed twice.

I 5: Female, Apostolic, single mother of 3, aged 46. Employed in casual labour. Interviewed twice.

I 6: Female, Christian, married mother of 5, aged 63. Retired and surviving on disability grant. Interviewed once.

I 7: Male, Christian, married father of 5, aged 65. Husband of I 6. Retired. Interviewed once.

I 8: Female, Christian, single mother of 4, aged 52. Housewife. Interviewed twice.

I 9: Female, Christian, married mother of 4, aged 49. Employed. Interviewed twice.

I 10: Male, Christian, married father of 3, aged 47. Employed. Interviewed once.

I 11: Female, Christian, married mother of 3, aged 44. Housewife, wife of I 10. Interviewed twice.

I 12: Male, Moslem, married father of 3, aged 50. Disabled. Interviewed twice.

I 13: Male, Rastafarian, married father of 3, aged 39. Self-employed. Interviewed once.

I 14: Male, Moslem, married into family of 4 children, aged 36. Employed in skilled technical profession. Interviewed once.

I 15: Female, Moslem, married mother of 4, aged 42. Housewife, wife of I 14. Interviewed twice.

I 16: Female, Christian, widowed mother of 4, aged 63. Housewife. Interviewed once.

I 17: Male, Moslem, married father of 2, aged 40. Employed. Interviewed once.

I 18: Female, Christian, singel mother of 3, aged 42. Employed in transport industry. Interviewed once.

I 19: Female, Christian, widowed mother of 7, aged 61. Housewife. Interviewed once.

I 20: Female, Christian, divorced mother of 4, aged 46. Employed in retail industry. Interviewed twice.

I 21: Female, Christian, married mother of 5, aged 47. Employed in health related profession. Interviewed twice.

I 22: Female, Christian, married mother of 8, aged 61. Housewife. Interviewed once.

I 23: Female, Christian, divorced mother of 9, aged 52. Employed. Interviewed twice.

I 24: Female, Christian, widowed mother of 2, aged 55. Employed. Interviewed once.

#### INFORMANTS

I 25: Female, Christian, single mother of 2, aged 40. Employed by local church organization to conduct community work, with emphasis on those affected by repression and violence. Resident outside areas of research, but with extensive knowledge and network inside these.

I 26: Male, Christian, senior local activist, aged 28. Professional with tertiary education, office holder in local area committee, one of the first wave political activists.

I 27: Male, Christian, employed professional in area of research, aged 33. Actively supportive of growing progressive structures in the area, trusted by community, and knowledgeable of the history and development of the area.

I 28: Female, Christian, eldest daughter of I 1, aged 31. Active in local organizations, though not involved in youth organizations, and served in an informal capacity as resource person, outreach worker, and information centre and monitor of police action in the area.

## ACTIVISTS

I 29: Male, Moslem, senior local activist, aged 26. Employed in trade union, office holder in local organization, and one of the main dynamos behind political activism in the area.

I 30: Male, Christian, junior local activist, aged 21. Unemployed since matric, member of local youth organization, son of I 18.

I 31: Female, Christian, junior office holder in local youth organization, aged 24. Unemployed, daughter of I 23.

I 32: Female, junior local activist, aged 18. Matriculant in 1988, was actively involved since late 1985. Daughter of I 13.

I 33: Male, Christian, junior local activist, aged 17. Though actively involved since early 1986, not belonging to any proper organization in the area. Has been charged with several unrest-related offences. Son of I 14.

## APPENDIX 2

### LIST OF QUOTATIONS

The following list relates to all unassigned quotations in the text, and is provided as a guide for the reader to what interviewee made what statement at what time. The statements can thereby be placed in their proper socio-historical context, and give further substantiation to the argument put forth in the thesis. The quotations are numbered in the order they appear per chapter, and so indicated in brackets in the text.

#### CHAPTER 1

Quotation 1, page 18: Interviewee 26, 2/10/86.

Q 2, p. 18: I 33, 23/4/86.

Q 3, p. 18: I 33, 23/4/86.

Q 4, p. 18: I 29, 25/2/87.

Q 5, p. 19: I 30, 29/2/88.

Q 6, p. 20: I 26, 17/11/87.

Q 7, p. 21: I 12, 26/11/86.

#### CHAPTER 3

Q 1, p. 64: I 26, 11/3/87.

Q 2, p. 68: I 3, 18/3/86.

Q 3, p. 74: I 26, 17/11/87.

Q 4, p. 76: I 25, 2/10/87.

#### CHAPTER 4

Q 1, p. 90: I 26, 11/3/87.

Q 2, p. 91: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 3, p. 93: I 15, 2/4/86.  
Q 4, p. 93: I 4, 21/3/86.  
Q 5, p. 94-5: I 22, 3/11/86.  
Q 6, p. 101: I 15, 19/5/87.  
Q 7, p. 102: I 9, 6/2/87.  
Q 8, p. 102: I 15, 19/5/87.  
Q 9, p. 103: I 2, 30/10/86.  
Q 10, p. 103: I 15, 19/5/87.  
Q 11, p. 104: I 1, 6/5/86.  
Q 12, p. 104: I 15, 19/5/87.  
Q 13, p. 106: I 32, 19/5/87.  
Q 14, p. 107: I 8, 14/3/88.  
Q 15, p. 108: I 2, 12/11/86.  
Q 16, p. 109: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 17, p. 109: I 23, 18/2/87.  
Q 18, p. 109: I 7, 8/5/87.  
Q 19, p. 110: I 3, 18/3/86.  
Q 20, p. 110: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 21, p. 110-1: I 8, 14/3/88.  
Q 22, p. 111: I 20, 16/7/87.  
Q 23, p. 111-2: I 8, 14/3/88.  
Q 24, p. 112: I 16, 7/4/87.  
Q 25, p. 117: I 24, 14/4/87.  
Q 26, p. 117: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 27, p. 118: I 10, 11/8/87.  
Q 28, p. 118: I 11, 11/8/87.

Q 29, p. 118: I 22, 25/5/87.  
Q 30, p. 119: I 5, 20/2/87.  
Q 31, p. 120: I 22, 25/5/87.  
Q 32, p. 120: I 5, 20/2/87.  
Q 33, p. 122-3: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 34, p. 124: I 22, 3/11/86.  
Q 35, p. 128: I 4, 21/3/86.  
Q 36, p. 128: I 9, 18/10/86.  
Q 37, p. 130: I 6, 8/5/87.  
Q 38, p. 130: I 8, 14/3/88.

#### CHAPTER 5

Q 1, p. 135: I 3, 27/10/86.  
Q 2, p. 138: I 12, 30/7/87.  
Q 3, p. 138: I 24, 21/7/88.  
Q 4, p. 138: I 21, 31/5/88.  
Q 5, p. 140: I 1, 16/1/87.  
Q 6, p. 141: I 12, 30/7/87.  
Q 7, p. 143: I 23, 15/4/86.  
Q 8, p. 143: I 21, 7/9/87.  
Q 9, p. 143: I 15, 2/4/86.  
Q 10, p. 144: I 20, 16/7/87.  
Q 11, p. 144: I 17, 22/11/87.  
Q 12, p. 146: I 5, 6/4/86.  
Q 13, p. 147: I 22, 3/11/86.  
Q 14, p. 148: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 15, p. 148: I 4, 26/5/87.  
Q 16, p. 149: I 4, 26/5/87.



Q 17, p. 156: I 8, 8/5/88.  
Q 18, p. 156: I 20, 16/7/87.  
Q 19, p. 158: I 8, 8/5/88.  
Q 20, p. 160: I 11, 11/8/87.  
Q 21, p. 161: I 18, 6/9/87.  
Q 22, p. 161: I 4, 26/5/87  
Q 23, p. 162: I 15, 19/5/87.  
Q 24, p. 162: I 5, 6/4/86.  
Q 25, p. 162-3: I 17, 22/11/87.

#### CHAPTER 6

Q 1, p. 169: I 1, 16/1/87.  
Q 2, p. 169: I 12, 30/7/87.  
Q 3, p. 169: I 1, 16/1/87.  
Q 4, p. 170: I 4, 21/3/86.  
Q 5, p. 170: I 1, 20/3/86.  
Q 6, p. 171-2: I 19, 25/9/87.  
Q 7, p. 172: I 12, 26/11/86.  
Q 8, p. 172: I 8, 14/3/88.  
Q 9, p. 172: I 1, 16/1/87.  
Q 10, p. 172: I 11, 10/11/87.  
Q 11, p. 173: I 4, 26/5/87.  
Q 12, p. 173: I 21, 7/9/87.  
Q 13, p. 173: I 16, 7/4/87.  
Q 14, p. 174: I 18, 6/9/87.  
Q 15, p. 175: I 22, 3/11/86.  
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Q 28, p. 186: I 18, 6/9/87

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